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"DOLLARS OR SENSE?"

A TALE OF EVERY-DAY LIFE

IN

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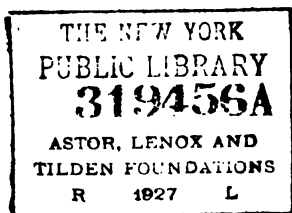
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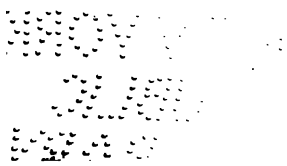
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PREFACE.

I FEEL it only right to mention that this book is an experiment. Though a novel, it has neither hero nor heroine, while as to "plot" there is none, for it contains little that is sensational, being a story of every-day life. The events narrated have actually happened, the characters are ordinary people; and such as I have met them, so are they described. Should their conversations prove dull or wanting in depth, I can only regret the accuracy of my memory. I have endeavoured to tell the story plainly, and to the best of my ability employed language such as is ordinarily used by those among whom my lot was cast. Should any of the characters appear overdrawn, let me assure you that they are not fancies of my imagination, but rather portraits from the observatory of my mind.

With this short explanation, I throw myself upon your indulgence.

ARTHUR LOUIS.

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DOLLARS OR SENSE?

A TALE OF EVERY-DAY LIFE

IN

ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

LADY LYNNYEAR'S BALL.

"WELL, I never expected to enjoy a ball again," said Cecil Sinclair, as he led his partner to a seat; "and here I am panting for breath, and ready to dance again at a moment's notice."

"Of course you are enjoying yourself, aren't you, dancing with me?" replied his companion gaily. "But, seriously, do tell me why you hate balls, hate dancing, and behave like a savage generally? There are all sorts of stories why you won't go out as you used to do, and now I want you to tell me the right one. They tell me you were Captain of the boats at Eton, that you are one of the best cricketers in your regiment, and that, at one time, you were one of the most sought after young men in town. Suddenly you collapsed—no more rowing, no more

cricket, no more dancing, no more flirting—and all for what? come, tell me about it.”

As his partner concluded this curious command, the stalwart young guardsman turned to look at this imperious questioner; and a pretty picture he thought her as she sat there, with parted lips and eager eyes, eyes which seemed to try and penetrate his thoughts even before he spoke to her. She was waiting to be told; she knew not what refusal meant; her wish was law, and that law had never yet been broken. A beautiful American girl, brought up in Dresden, spoilt by her parents and her sisters; two sisters, who were now sharing with her the homage of the entire London world during this their first season in that city. Charming and fascinating, as all beautiful Americans are, but more decided in manner, more imperious and exacting than an English girl would be, with her, to ask a question was to expect an answer. No thought of refusal ever entered her head. Here, before her, was Captain Sinclair, perhaps the most reserved man in London—certainly one of the most admired. He interested her. She wanted to hear all about him; so, without hesitation, she went to the root of the matter and asked him to tell her.

With rather an amused smile, Cecil answered, “Well, if you really do wish me to tell you why I go out so little and do not care for things as I did once, I will tell you; but it is a sad story”—and here the smile died from his lips, and his handsome

face assumed an expression of gravity, while his thoughts went back into memories of the past—"but why do you want to know all about me?" he queried, as though still hesitating to speak.

"Why? why, because I am interested in you," said the girl, quickly.

"Is that all?" in a disappointed tone.

Cecil was a born flirt, and could seldom be alone with a pretty woman without very quickly betraying that fact. Small wonder; his successes had been so numerous, that to look unutterables and convey meanings was, to him, a second nature.

"Oh, well, because I like you. Now, do go on; I am waiting," and, slowly opening her fan, Miss Courtown leant back in her chair with a gesture of impatience.

"Well, then, here goes," said the young man, his eyes on the ground and speaking in rather a shame-faced way, as all reserved people do when permitting themselves to break their golden rule of silence, and betray an emotion or sentiment, which has hitherto been so carefully locked up and concealed from the eyes of the world. "It isn't much of a story, after all; but, if you want me to tell it you, why, of course I must do so, though it saddens me to speak of a time of great grief."

"Oh, no," she cried, now all sympathy and regret; "please don't tell me; it was wrong and thoughtless of me to ask you. I should not have done it. Please forgive me and say no more about it."

"Not at all," said Cecil, slowly. "I should really like to tell you; there is something about you so attractive, so *sympathique*, that I feel it would be delightful to talk about myself and my troubles to you. I'll go on, if I may—may I?" looking up into the soft brown eyes which were still fixed full upon him.

"Yes, you may," answered his companion, gently; colouring slightly beneath that gaze.

"Well, I fear it is scarcely a story, after all, and will only bore you to listen to," he continued. "I once had a sister. She was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. She was the embodiment of all I most admired in the other sex. We two had always been great pals; till she married, I took her everywhere. We enjoyed the same kind of things, and liked to talk them over together afterwards. She married. She was more admired than any woman in England. She was a popular idol, almost; her talents were household words. She could do everything well, and no one enjoyed life more than she did. She had everything in life to make her happy, and she was happy."

"Was happy?" breathed Florence, softly.

"Yes," he answered, "was happy. She is dead, now." (After a pause.) "That is my story, and I never cared to go into society again. At every ball I found myself looking for her entrance—almost expecting to see her sail like a queen into the room, making every one look dowdy beside her, as she

used, somehow, to do. I missed her everywhere; there was a gap I could not bear to look upon; and so I stayed at home, that I might not see it."

"I quite understand," said Florence, in a low tone, looking sympathetically at the man beside her, scanning him with interest—this proud, reserved person, whom women deemed heartless, and incapable of any feeling, except, perhaps, for himself. There he was, before her; his heart bare, and that heart apparently full of the remembrance of a great sorrow.

"But come," cried Cecil, pulling himself together and speaking in a cheery tone, "this will never do. I am giving you the blues. Fancy having the blues at a ball! This is a place to enjoy ourselves, and I am sure our hostess has done all she can to further that end. Let us come and have another dance before we face your irate partner for the last one, who is probably at this moment thirsting for my blood."

"Yes, we must be getting back," said Florence, rising; "but one word before we go—thank you so much for telling me your story."

"Oh, that's all right," replied Cecil, "it's nice to tell you anything; for, somehow, I always feel happier when I am with you, and can bear to talk of things which at other times I could not even think of."

"Is that true?" turning and looking at him, "am I really *sympathique*?"

"That's just what you are; and when you are cheery and gay I actually catch the contagion, and

feel that, after all, I have mistaken my vocation in going about with a long face, and that cheerful society and jolly people are what I really most prefer. Now, I have enjoyed this evening awfully, and if you will only tell me when you are going to another ball, I will get an invitation and go there too. I verily believe that in time you would convert me into a dancing-man. But here comes your sister; who is that with her? Why, it's Gerald Drayton. By Jove! how pretty your sister is! though not quite so lovely as your other sister, Miss Mona; nor"—turning to look critically at his companion—"quite so charming as you are."

"How dare you," exclaimed Miss Courtown. "I hate barefaced compliments, especially when they can't be true, because I know that both my sisters are beautiful. Well, Constance, where have you been all this time?"

"Oh, that's good," replied that young lady, turning laughingly to her companion; "where have I been? when we have been sent to look for you because of your long disappearance; and on asking some one where you were, we gained the information that you were last seen flirting desperately with Captain Sinclair in the conservatory. That is where we were going, and it is from there that you have just emerged. Well, Captain Sinclair, you haven't danced with me all the evening; it's about time now. I'm so tired of Mr. Drayton; let us change partners; here, Mr. Drayton, take Florence back to our sorrow-

ously jerking her head towards a sofa, where sat a pale-faced youth, splendid as to his shirt-front and collar.

"Thank you," said Cecil, with a bow; "I am much obliged."

"No, don't say that; I only want you to see that I feel sure you will not misunderstand what I am going to say, and deem me forward or interfering, but I cannot help noticing your attention to my sister. I know how good and how pretty she is, and fear that you may begin to grow too fond of her, and—"

"Begin?" smiled Cecil, with an emphasis on the word.

"Oh dear!" sighed Constance, "then I am right. Of course you love her; who could help it? But you must not go on, you must not, indeed, you cannot be ignorant of your own power, you are so manly and good, just the kind of man whose love a girl would readily return; but though it sounds uncomplimentary to say so, I don't want Florence to love you, and if I can prevent it I will." Again he bowed, rather stiffly this time. "Oh, yes," she continued, "you are getting angry. I am so glad, for that is what I want. I should like to annoy you so greatly that you would get up and go away, refusing to have any more to do with a family which contains such a character as myself."

"And may I be permitted to ask why," answered Cecil, looking amused—"why am I to detest you and all your belongings? No easy task you assign

me, Miss Constance," with a look full of meaning from those rather sad grey eyes.

"And yet," said Constance, "it is easier now than when it is too late. Oh, Captain Sinclair, think of me what you will, despise me, hate me, if so you must, but I am compelled to tell you I know that Florence likes you, that she is attracted to you, and that if you persevere she is sure to love you; and if she does, it means misery for you, and misery for her whose happiness is almost more to me than my own. My father intends her to make a great match, and he is stern and unyielding, he is worldly and hard, he knows nothing of sentiment and smiles at love. Captain Sinclair, you are kind, you are more, you are chivalrous; to my sister that is much, to my father that is nothing. Captain Sinclair, you are poor; to my sister that is nothing, to my father that is more than he can bear; never would he consent to Florence's marriage to a poor man. No tears, no grief could make him relent, because he believes in neither grief nor tears. Believe me, if you persevere in your present course, it means unhappiness for all concerned, and misery for you—misery for her." Her cheeks flushed, her heart beating, panting, with an emotion which she had taken no pains to conceal. Constance threw herself back in her chair, waiting for the answer to this strange appeal.

"Miss Constance," said Cecil at length, in a low, suppressed voice, "I know that in speaking thus you are acting in a noble manner, impelled by no feeling

but one of excessive loyalty towards your sister." Here Constance put out her hand, which Cecil, gravely taking for one second, continued: "I say excessive, because I think you exaggerate the gravity of the situation. Of all you have just said, I can but think of one sentence, and that is, if I seek to win the affections of your sister, I may not seek in vain. Maybe you magnify the power of my fascinations. You are eager and excited, and yet your words bestow glad thrills of joy, for I do love your sister, deeply, fervently, madly, wildly; as I never thought I could love any woman in this world, and if she will but return that love, then shall I be the happiest of men. It is true I am poor, it is true I have little in the world beyond my profession: but what of that; wealth is not always health, nor does happiness depend on riches."

"Money goes a long way towards happiness, anyhow," interrupted Constance.

"Yes, true, and perhaps," with a sigh, "it is selfish of me to think of asking anyone to share my poverty with me, but it must be. May you not, after all, be wrong in trying to thwart destiny, in striving to place asunder what has already been prearranged?"

"Oh, that's nonsense, Captain Sinclair; I don't believe in that kind of thing. Perhaps you think it was arranged a few hundred years ago that at this hour, this moment, you and I, then particles of dust, should now be sitting in this gorgeous room, lighted by wax candles—all those years ago they could

not know what wax candle were—that we should be sitting upon these chairs, which were to be covered with an ugly chintz. Now, I am sure, if they had never met wax candles, it was not possible for anyone to ordain the pattern of this chintz.”

“Perhaps,” answered Cecil, smiling, “destiny is very far-seeing, and may even condescend to small things like you and me and the chintz.”

“Thank you, Captain Sinclair, for coupling me with a chair-cover; but I ought to be grateful you included yourself, for, do you know, people say that you have a high opinion of that individual, and that you are the most self-satisfied person in the world.”

“That is because I am so easily satisfied,” smiled Cecil, “and can sit at home, in my own company, instead of scampering about the town in search of amusement, like other fellows; but, assuming that I am self-satisfied, I like to satisfy myself, and, to return to where we were when you branched off into chintzes, notwithstanding all you have said, I intend to satisfy myself that it will be for your sister’s happiness before I give her up; so, there, if we are to fight, please take that as a declaration of war.”

“Ah, well, you men are obstinate, pig-headed people, and when an idea gets into your heads, it finds itself located in such a strange place that it cannot get out. I warn you that you are courting unhappiness for both; if you believe in fate, I believe in presentiments, and I have a presentiment that

you will one day wish you had taken my advice; not that in any case I believe Florence will ever care for you," she continued, with feminine inconsistency. "Oh, yes, you smile as though it were all arranged; but, it isn't settled yet, and, at any rate, you won't smile when you interview papa."

"I've faced an enemy before now; and, though I didn't like it, I never shirked a disagreeable duty," said Cecil, gravely.

"Oh, well, let's go into the other room, now; I know you soldiers are all for fight and glory, but you will find there is more fight than glory when your time comes. An enemy you can shoot is one thing, an infuriated American papa another, as you'll find."

On their entrance into the ball-room Miss Courtown, evidently a most popular young lady, was immediately surrounded by men, soliciting the honour of a dance.

"Now, Miss Courtown, you really must keep that promise of yours," exclaimed Charlie Summers; a young man with a childish face and laughing blue eyes. "Really, you know, it's awfully hard on a fellow to keep him waiting so long. I shall die with ennui if you don't dance with me soon; it's all I came here for; it is, indeed"—following up this assertion with a killing glance, which caused the person addressed to laugh aloud.

"Well, Mr. Summers, I wouldn't be hard on a fellow for worlds," said she, laughing; "nor should

I like you to succumb to ennui; so please dance the next dance with me, and look at me all the time like you did just now."

"How did I look?" answered Charlie, trying to seem innocent, while he fairly blushed with pleasure at having so easily obtained his desire.

"Oh, yes, you know how you looked; it was too fascinating; so go away and practice it before a glass till it is time to fetch me for the dance."

"Yes, do run away, Charlie, there's a good boy," exclaimed Lord Ringwood, earnestly; "you mustn't monopolise Miss Courtown like that. Won't you treat me as well as you did that little boy?"—addressing himself to the young lady in question—"how about *my* dance? It's doosed hard lines to be cut out by a child like that, 'pon my honour, it is; you'll give me a dance soon, won't you, Miss Courtown? I really want one as much as ever I wanted anything in my life."

"Well, that can't be very much," she replied; "for I don't suppose you ever took the trouble to want anything very much; but we'll have a dance together directly; I should really like it. Come up after the next one, and we'll fix something or other."

"Oh, *ce cher fix*," quoth his lordship, "how I do love your little American words; tell me some more, Miss Courtown."

"No, not yet; I mustn't spoil the conversation that I intend to have with you during that dance."

"Well, Ringwood, when you have quite done, I

think Miss Courtown and I will continue on our way," broke in Sinclair, who had all this time occupied himself in looking about for Florence; "really, Miss Courtown, you are so sought after, your cavalier ought to be a very patient man."

"Well, and you are patient, poor thing," said Constance, soothingly. "*Did it, was it*, want to be talking to some one else; well, come along, *you* wouldn't be bored in my company, would you, Lord Ringwood?" looking up at him from beneath her long lashes.

"No, by Jove, no," replied that gentleman, pulling his mustache, "some fellows don't know when they are well off. Now a fellow like Sinclair is out of place in a ball-room; he's more at home on parade, aren't you, Cecil? He's got no sentiment, Miss Courtown, and doesn't know how to enjoy himself or appreciate the society of 'lovely woman,' no feelings, no heart, never really been in love once. I am sure of it," he added in a stage whisper.

"No, old chap, I don't pretend to love everyone I meet," replied Cecil, with a smile. "I leave that to children and humbugs."

"Come along," exclaimed Constance; "everyone knows, Lord Ringwood, that you have reduced love-making to a science. The greatest amount of devotion with the least possible quantity of trouble; practice makes perfect, you see. Now, Captain Sinclair is quite different; he has never been in love, and I don't think he ever will be," with a sly look at

Cecil, "and that's the reason why I like him ever so much better than I do you. Now I really must go in the direction of mamma, or my poor afflicted parent will imagine that I am lost."

CHAPTER II.

"IT WAS AT DRESDEN."

THOUGH I cordially dislike reading explanations, and greatly prefer to find my story served up to me ready made, as it were, with as little as possible to puzzle my poor brain, yet am I aware that explanation is sometimes necessary, and now, when writing a story myself, fear that I must give some kind of description to my readers. It will be as brief as possible.

There had for some years been living in Dresden for purposes of education, an American family. This family consisted of three daughters and one son. The latter was a *mauvais sujet* and with him we have nothing to do. The sisters were undeniably beautiful, possessing a loveliness destined to make a noise in the world. At Dresden they had many admirers; chief of these were two Englishmen who had been passing through that city, but considerably lengthened their stay, impelled thereto by the attractions of the three lovely sisters. Seeing them frequently, and becoming speedily intimate, as congenial companions do when meeting on foreign soil, it is small wonder that the freshness and originality, to say nothing of the beauty, of these young girls should have completely captivated the hearts of

Cecil Sinclair and Gerald Drayton. One week of intimacy abroad will do more towards making people appreciate each other's society than whole months of London life. There, amid the fevered rush of modern society, there is no time for friendship or the exchange of sympathy and ideas. There is small opportunity for the affections; you are in the swim and must go with the tide, and as that tide will hurry you on, there can be no dwelling by the way; but in a foreign city, to dwell is necessary, and, circumstances being favorable, to fall in love not seldom inevitable, when the dwellers are young men like our two Englishmen, and the objects of their admiration three young and beautiful American girls like the Misses Courtown.

These young ladies were the possessors of a stern and unyielding father and a fond and doting mother. Their father was not blessed with too much of this world's goods, and evidently realised that in his beautiful daughters there lay the road to fortune, or rather, the possession of three wealthy sons-in-law, therefore Mr. Courtown cherished a hatred for detriments almost equal to that of the most manœuvring London mothers.

At Dresden these two young men were encouraged by him; they were handsome, well-born and rich, or seemed so; certainly they were agreeable companions, and their intimacy appeared desirable. Captain Sinclair was a tall, handsome man of about thirty years, though his quiet, sad expression and ear-

nest grey eyes gave one the impression of greater age. He was a typical guardsman, also reported to have run the gauntlet of boundless admiration, and to have come heart-whole from the ordeal; as such he was naturally an object of interest to those girls who had not yet made their *début* into the great world to which he belonged. Captain Sinclair, in his turn, was greatly attracted to these fresh young natures, to him a perfect revelation, after long experience of worldly women with whom he had flirted, and pretended to love as fate or fancy willed it.

In London he had, as was the fashion, chiefly sought the companionship of married women—smart, rather rapid ladies of the *beau monde*. Skilled in the language of love, and proficient in the *finesse* of modern repartee, the society of girls was considered insipid, and perhaps slightly boring. One after another the reigning beauties had tried their hands upon Cecil Sinclair, and one by one they gave him up in despair. It was not that he could not flirt, not that he could not make love—all agreed that he could simulate feeling very well when the situation seemed to demand it, but that was just what it was—simulation. And when one is perhaps in earnest oneself, it is terribly galling to discover that the only passion you can awaken in the heart of a beloved object is, after all, but an artificial counterpart of the real article.

Therefore, as I said before, Cecil was relinquished in despair; those who had burnt their fingers declared

that he was a shocking flirt, which he certainly was, but then he had provocation, and those who had only "gone for" him out of either curiosity or pique, declared he was the victim of some long past "affaire," and, therefore, hopeless for the kind of thing for which they had destined him.

And here, then, was Cecil, a quiet, grave man of thirty, saddened prematurely by the death of his only sister, and blasé of all the frivolity of pleasure, suddenly re-blossoming into life, as it were, on account of a little girl of whose existence a month ago he had never even dreamt; taking delight in childish amusements, laughing and making merry over little every-day trifles, and rapidly learning to adore a sweet, girlish face as in all his life he had never adored before. It was not long before he realized that this face was his all in all; of this family of three sisters, Florence, the eldest, was to him as the jewel without price. He would win her if he could—without her he would not remain.

But Cecil's was a character unselfish and full of a kind of out of date chivalry not often to be met with when "*chacun pour soi*" is the motto which is in everybody's mouth. He argued with himself that he, a younger son, and therefore poor, had no right to attempt to win the love of such an innocent child as Florence, before she had seen something of the great world of which he knew so much. He felt it would be unfair, unmanly even, for him, with all his power of knowledge, and experience, to swoop

ing parent, and, Captain Sinclair, come and dance with me."

"Well," laughed her sister, "you certainly do arrange things to your own satisfaction, but perhaps I had better go back to mamma. I have been teaching Captain Sinclair to like dancing, so I expect you will enjoy your turn with him. Come, Mr. Drayton, if you don't mind, I will go back with you."

"You'll give me another dance later on, won't you, Miss Courtown," said Cecil, as he was being led away, not too willingly, by the imperative Constance.

"Perhaps," she nodded, gaily, "but you must remember I have first to reap the whirlwind, in the shape of my partners, for the last two dances, and I shall probably be obliged to appease their wrath; duty first," she added, with a laugh.

"Hooray," then I may take the remainder of that sentence to myself," said Cecil, but here Constance broke in with,

"Take her away, Mr. Drayton; Captain Sinclair is my partner now, and Florence sha'n't flirt with him when he ought to be talking to me; and as for you," she continued, looking at Gerald, who had never ceased gazing at her, as though to ask why he had been sent away and another taken in his place. "As for you, if you can't make yourself sufficiently entertaining to engage the attention of your companion and prevent her talking to other people—well, I am sorry for you; tell her some of those things you have been telling me," she added, with a sly look; "they

are so amusing, Florence," calling out to her sister, as she and Mr. Drayton disappeared into the next room. "Now, then, Captain Sinclair, sit down here; I want to talk to you."

"Want to talk to me;" he said, "why, I thought you wanted to dance."

"Oh, yes, I daresay, and like a lamb led to the slaughter you came sadly after me to dance at my bidding—no, thanks, I have lots of partners, and am under no necessity to run round conservatories hunting up people who don't want me. Why, he," nodding her head in the direction where Gerald had last been seen, "is just dying to dance with me now, and you don't really suppose I came all this way on purpose to ask you to dance with me."

"Well, I thought it rather nice of you," answered Cecil, with a smile, "but if you didn't want to dance with me, may I ask why you took so much trouble to come and—and disturb us?"

"Yes, disturb is just the word. I did come to disturb you; you have been sitting out two dances with my sister, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"In fact, you have been here something like half an hour."

"Yes, but really, Miss Courtown; why this awful catechism?"

"Because, Captain Sinclair, I want to talk to you on a very delicate subject. You are a clever man, very different from that kind of thing," contemptu-

down upon this little confiding dove, and, taking advantage of an ignorance born of innocence, endeavour to entrap the first devotion of that childish heart. That ignorance which to some men would have proved an inducement to "go in and win," marking her out as lawful and easy prey, was the very thing which deterred Cecil from attempting to gain her affections. He told himself that he would wait.

The Courtowns were going to London for the ensuing season; there, surrounded by men of all nations, courted, fêted and admired as his little girl was sure to be, he would enter the lists for her against the whole world, and if he could from all rivals win her, he, handicapped by poverty, would do battle for his lady with all the men of wealth and power; and then, should he succeed, what joy, what glory, to take to his home and his heart, this prize, so hardly fought for, so hardly won.

It may seem rather high-flown and overdrawn to reason in this strain, but it is only right to put on record that thus it was with Cecil, strange though it may appear; and therefore when the time came for him to return to his regiment in London he had said no word of love, but waited till they should all meet again in the following month.

Florence, the eldest of the three sisters, who had so attracted this man, was certainly handsome in face and form, but her chief charm lay in her manner, and a certain downright thoroughness which occa-

sionally gave index to the strength of character within. She was "great fun," as American girls often are, but there were times when the clouds would gather about her as though her mind had realized already that the path of rectitude was not devoid of thorns.

Mona, the second girl, was lovely, exquisitely lovely. I cannot describe her; the sisters were pretty, but this girl was perfectly beautiful. The beauty of Florence and Constance was of that kind which appealed to the senses, as it were. Men would look at them as they passed in the street and straightway declare that, "I have fallen quite in love with that girl, by Jove!" but with Mona it was different; people would turn to look at her as she passed, but no one would dream of declaring themselves in love with that face, for it was the face of an angel, and it seemed nigh sacrilege to connect such a face with anything so every-day, so mundane, as love.

Mona was fair, with a complexion which looked as though it were almost too delicate to exist in the open air. Her hair was golden, though her eyebrows and lashes were of a darker shade—lashes which almost concealed two eyes of heavenly blue; great pathetic eyes that seemed to look at you in an innocent wonder, with a sort of mute protest, as though she were endeavoring to understand how or why you found such interest in those trifling words you said. In company Mona was generally silent, giving the *pas* to her more lively sisters; but though

it might be more amusing to laugh and talk with either of the others, yet a conversation with Mona was something to look forward to—something to seek. You would invariably leave her with a sense of your own unworthiness, as it were; impressed with the idea that you were, after all, only frivolous and superficial; it was beyond your power to penetrate the depths of this girl's beauty of thought, or fathom the workings of that pure and guileless mind. To the pure all things are pure; to Mona, the beautiful, all things were beautiful; and one would no more have dreamt of telling a story with a *double-entendre* to that girl than one would break out into comic song in the middle of service in church. There is a sense of fitness perceptible to all. A man can quickly gauge the nature of any woman with whom he is brought in contact, and his conversation is fashioned according to the person before him. In Mona, one at once recognized a something—something both gentle and sublime—which imbued you with a sense of inferiority and would-be goodness, that had not been felt since childhood's earliest days. This girl invariably acted like a silent reproach to all that was worst in a man's nature. Poor Mona, I fear I make it sound as though she were a prude. Far from it; innocent and without *arrière-pensée* of any kind, she simply possessed a nature too good for this world—a nature fit mate for those angels whose company, while yet young, she was destined to join.

Constance was to her a great contrast—high-

spirited, amusing and quick at speech. She partook somewhat of her father's worldly character, and feared not, even at that early age, to express partiality for the goods of this world and the money which was able to provide them. As a companion, she was delightful; but woe betide that luckless individual who attempted to "chaff" her, unless he were an expert at wordy fence. Like all American girls who have learnt the art of repartee, she was quicker and more to the point than any other girl of the same age. This is one reason why American girls meet with such success in London life; besides, of course, their beauty and personal charm, it is this proficiency in conversation, which steers them safely along that rock-bound stream. In America this talent has not much opportunity for display. The majority of Americans do not "chaff." No American man would "chaff" a woman. American men are much under the thumb of American women. In London it is different—"chaff" is the conversation of society. Young men and young girls are brought up on "chaff." In all large families "chaff" exists to a great extent. Small fear of anyone who possesses brothers and sisters, remaining ignorant of his or her little peculiarities or idiosyncrasies. At school a boy has to stand a shower of "chaff"; in his regiment, on board his ship, or in his profession, whatever it may be, a young man learns to keep his temper and answer "chaff" with "chaff"; therefore, to "chaff" well in England is an essentially useful,

even necessary, accomplishment. Then think how very readily a young man, prone to a perhaps undue appreciation of this talent, is apt to be attracted to a beautiful young lady, capable of extinguishing anyone who attempts to spar with her in words, and able to render even himself speechless and silent. Thus it was with Gerald Drayton. Gerald was a barrister, not overwhelmed with briefs, and now enjoying a little holiday with his friend, Cecil Sinclair. How two men so dissimilar in character became such friends, was an enigma; but certain it was that the young and cheery barrister was a great ally of the tall, quiet and grave guardsman.

When Gerald first met the Courtown family, he soon singled out Constance as the fittest object for his attentions. Her gaiety and high spirits, for him had an especial charm, and he confided to Cecil that really that girl was "splendid sport." She had such a lot of "go," and knew what she was talking about. Before they had been many days together, Gerald soon discovered the truth of this last assertion, and after having come off considerably worsted in many a wordy battle, would find cause to complain, "Really, Miss Courtown, you do snub a chap so."

"Well," replied that lady, quite unabashed, "you see, a chap wants it so."

"A woman, a dog and a walnut-tree, the more you beat them the better they be," and assuming the truth of this well-known saying, if a young lady

undertakes to snub and morally beat a young gentleman who up to date has considered himself perfectly irresistible, then will it follow that the young gentleman will find himself more and more attracted to the author of that castigation, until little by little he has become her devoted slave.

Gerald did not flirt with Constance; far from it. They were nearly always occupied in squabbling amicably, and Gerald took his beating in good part, positively revelling in his own discomfiture. There are some blows more agreeable than caresses, and it is undeniably more pleasant to be blown up by a fascinating person like Constance, than to be flattered and cajoled by less attractive humanity. If Gerald made attempts to become tender, Constance would laugh at him so unmercifully that her too ardent admirer would commence to become cross; exactly what the fickle beauty desired, giving excuse for a regular pitched battle, out of which Gerald, as usual, came vanquished—and smiling. This is a pretty fair outline of how things stood when the two Englishmen returned to London, and many were the hopes and anticipations of a pleasant time together in the spring, when all should meet again.

"I'll show you about," said Gerald. "I tell you what, Miss Constance, you trust to me as guide, mentor and friend, and I will undertake to educate your still unenlightened mind. I'll show you Hurlingham, Rotten Row, Sandown and Madame Tussaud's, till you will be so full of knowledge and

wisdom, that on your return to New York you will be in a condition to 'boss it,' as they say there, over all the other girls in that city."


"Thank you, Mr. Drayton; I don't suppose I shall need your explanations or your guidance; *you* have seen all these things, *your* wisdom we appreciate; perhaps 'twere folly to become wise after such a fashion."

"Good-bye, Miss Courtown," said Cecil gravely, as he took Florence by the hand. "I hope we may meet in London soon; it is a place of turmoil and trouble, and these quiet times here are over now, but perhaps we may some day manage to have a day on the river, where we can enjoy long talks of dear old Dresden and the pleasant times we passed there together."

Six weeks had elapsed since this much talked of meeting had taken place. During that time the three sisters had become the fashion; their beauty had taken the town by storm, their praises were on every tongue, and no party or ball was considered complete if unadorned by one or other of these fair American girls. When English society procures a lion, that lion bids good-bye to rest; thus it was "society," having discovered and lionized our three American friends, they had suffered all the penalties of such dubious pleasure. Day and night the calls of social duty had bid them come, and obeying, they had known no rest. To Florence the world of London centred round one tall, handsome figure, which, al-

most unknown to herself, had become the one being to whom her heart was given. The more she went out, the more chances she had of meeting Cecil Sinclair, and therefore she had taken pleasure in going everywhere, wherever he might be seen. It seemed to her that Cecil was different in London from what he had been in Dresden; he was more quiet, more grave even, than of yore; and when she asked people about him, they told her that he was a man with a story, a man who had been spoilt and was now blasé and indifferent, that he gave himself airs, and refused to go out, though certainly he had been seen at many more entertainments during the last few weeks than he had previously graced during the same number of years.

All this, as may be supposed, only stimulated the interest which Florence felt for her Dresden admirer, and she had begun to look for his coming and sigh at his going, in a way which warned her that life without him to watch for and sigh for would be a very blank kind of existence indeed. How she had longed to know his history, how she had wondered within herself what this story could be! some horrible woman, she supposed, till at last, on the night of Lady Lynnyear's ball, she had plucked up courage and asked him outright. She had wanted to know, he had not told her, and so she asked him. A woman there was in the story, it is true, but what a relief! the woman in question had only been a sister; and much as Florence felt for the great grief of the



young man whose life had been so clouded, yet she could not but rejoice to discover that the *grande passion* had had nothing to do with his present gravity and frequent fits of sadness.

To Mona this life was uncongenial and tiring; still, she went through it all with a good grace, simply looking wonderingly out of those great pathetic eyes, as though to ask if it were for this that all these people were gathered together; or gazed around in a puzzled kind of fashion, marvelling that all this glare, all this light of gas and parade of clothes and jewels could be called pleasure. That she was admired, was a matter of course; but though her admirers waxed enthusiastic over the perfect outlines of that lovely figure, and the gentle beauty of that divine face, the other sisters came in for a fuller share of practical admiration, if crowds of men, anxious to obey their slightest wish, be what is meant by admiration in a practical form. Mona required to be well known and understood to be appreciated, and it was not in the feverish unrest of a London ball-room that such a nature as hers could expect the homage which was its due. Constance was in her element; this was life, this was a constant round of enjoyment; the more men around her to do her bidding, the happier did she feel. Flirting gave her pleasure, and admiration was what she loved, and here were dozens of admirers all anxious to flirt as much as she might choose. What fun they were, these men, she thought, all dressed alike, all talking

alike, all made after the self-same pattern, the same interests, the same likes and dislikes even. "They are like a flock of sheep," she used to say to Florence; "I declare, they only come and talk to me, begging me to dance, 'just one little turn'—mimicking the falsetto tones of one well-known high-collared masher—just because everyone else has done the same, and they have seen other people wishing to dance with me.

"They haven't an ounce of originality in their composition. There isn't one man in every ten who would have the gumption to go and ask a girl to dance with him just because she took his individual fancy. No, that would be trusting his own taste too far. 'Everyone says that such and such a girl is charming; she is the fashion, and it's rather "swagger" to be seen dancing with her, so, I'll go and ask her,' and, as I happen to be the such and such girl of the moment, off they come to me and say exactly the same things to me, one after the other, like a lot of parrots, exactly. But there are some nice ones among them, too," she would condescendingly admit, after a little reflection. "Some of them are great fun, and real manly men; and then there is that devoted slave, Mr. Drayton; he is so useful; I often think I don't half appreciate him as he deserves."

"No; I am sure you don't," would answer her sister. "You lead that poor man an awful life."

"Well, I can't help it," she added; "it is such fun

to tease him; he lays himself so open to it, and then he is so good-natured he doesn't really mind, you know."

CHAPTER III.

END OF THE BALL.

LADY LYNNYEAR was a great swell. Her ball had been looked forward to as one of the events of the season. The Lynnyears were big people, and a ball at their house an affair of no little social importance.

Lady Lynnyear had "taken up" the Courtowns, and it was mainly owing to her friendship that the girls had become so greatly the fashion. Constance, in particular, delighted her ladyship, and the admiration she called forth, wherever she went, was an indirect compliment to her own taste in having selected, as her protégée, such a charming specimen of American girlhood.

The giving of this ball had been greatly looked forward to by the Courtowns; they had cajoled Lady Lynnyear into upsetting her house, and persuaded his lordship to take up his residence at the Club during the transformation of the spacious drawing-rooms into ball-rooms, and the occupation of his own especial sanctums as repositories for cloaks, tea and light refreshment. The result equalled their expectations. Each girl was enjoying herself after her own fashion. Florence, as has been seen, had danced several times with her guardsman, and suc-

ceeded in overcoming his outward barrier of coldness and reserve. Mona was at home, as the sisters disliked going out in crowds, as they called it; and, therefore, never more than two were at any one entertainment. Constance was having a good time—sought after by all, laughing, chaffing and teasing everyone with whom she came in contact, besides which there was the fun of making the faithful Gerald alternately miserable or happy, just as the fancy might prompt her to do, by refusing to dance with him, or, perhaps, turning on him, all smiles and sweetness, when that much ill-used individual least expected it.

When Constance and Captain Sinclair re-entered the ball-room the ball was drawing to a close; many people had left, and others were meditating a speedy following of their example. However, the Courtowns were, of course, expected to stay to the very end, have supper with the house party, and talk over the events of the evening, after the departure of the guests. While Cecil was aiding his partner in her explanation to Mrs. Courtown as to the reasons of her having been left so long childless, their hostess approached them, and addressing that lady, said:

“Now, remember, you don’t throw us over. I expect you and all your three daughters next week at Lynnyear Castle. We are going to be very quiet, and there will be nothing going on but a little cricket the boys are getting up, and tennis for the others, if they care for it; it will be a nice, restful time, after

these last few weeks of dissipation, and I am sure it will do us all good."

"Oh, it will be lovely," answered Constance, anticipating her mother; "we have all been looking forward to it ever so much; and we are coming, the whole lot of us. Mona, who is one of your most devoted admirers, told me to tell you that Lynnyear Castle is the one place she is longing to see; so there is not much fear of our forgetting to come."

Lady Lynnyear was a tall, handsome woman of about five and forty; she looked, though, a great deal younger than her age, and possessed a charm of manner quite impossible to describe, though recognizable at the first glance, by all who spoke to her. She belonged to the most exclusive set—a set above society, as it were. She and her daughters had gone out but little, and it was seldom that they entertained at Garstone House, but when they did, there was a general rush to be amongst those favored with invitations.

Society in London is very mixed. It consists of royalties, great nobles, and a heterogeneous mass of lesser people. But there exists in London a select few—the highest and greatest in the land are among them—whose position is so secure, and names so great in sound, that to them society is unnecessary as a means to an end, or a stepping-stone to recognition; the ways of society do not exactly fit in with their ideas of what is *convenable*; and as society bores them, they are not often to be seen among the

well-dressed crowds who compose this mingled throng. Of these were the Lynnyears, an excellent type of the *haute noblesse* of England.

Lord Lynnyear was a peer who had never yet done anything to render himself famous, neither had he ever done anything of which he might feel justly ashamed. On the contrary, whatever he did, he had no fear to announce to the world, and notably on one occasion he had proved this by boldly coming forward in a police court to protect the fair name of some unknown woman, whom less chivalrous men had left in an unpleasant position; proudly he came forth, gave his name and address, and testified to the circumstances of the case, regardless of gossip and heedless of scandal. The woman—it was proved afterwards he did not even know her name—came scathless through the ordeal, thanks to this man whom people had described as proud, and wrapped up in self. Proud he perhaps was, but every inch a gentleman, and, as the above anecdote will go to prove, ready to face whatever he justly considered duty, however unpleasant that duty might be.

Such were the host and hostess of the ball where the Courtowns and others had been spending such a happy evening; and it was at Lynnyear Castle, one of the most beautiful places in England, that they were engaged to visit, to obtain that fresh air of which they all stood so much in need.

“You are coming too, of course, Captain Sinclair,” continued Lady Lynnyear, turning to that individ-

ual, with her sweet and captivating smile. "The boys want your assistance at cricket, you know; they tell me they count upon you for at least fifty runs a day; if you only fulfil their expectations, I can assure you a perfect ovation from the villagers, as ours is a great cricket county, and the people round are simply wrapped up in the various matches we have at the castle."

"Well, I will do my best, Lady Lynnyear," answered Cecil, modestly. "You know I am awfully fond of cricket, besides which, a few days in the country is what I am always ready for at any time; and I have had too many good times at Lynnyear to miss any opportunity which may present itself for their repetition."

"Are you going to have a large party, Lady Lynnyear?" asked Mrs. Courtown.

"No, not more than a dozen or so altogether," she replied. "There will be you and your three daughters, Captain Sinclair here, Mr. Drayton, Lord Ringwood, Mr. Summers, Lord and Lady Tarragon and a few of Jim's college friends; but we shall be a cheery party, and if we only have fine weather, it will be great fun, I am sure."

At this moment a stir was noticeable at the far end of the room, and some one came up and whispered to her ladyship that the royalties were intending to depart; so, hastily crossing over to the farther door, Lady Lynnyear disappeared to bid good night to her distinguished guests, and thank them for hav-

ing aided to the success of her party by their presence.


"Now, then's the time to dance," cried Charlie Summers, coming up to Constance. "I feel at my ease, now; all this time I have been dancing like a wax doll on its best behaviour, fearing lest I might at any moment tread on royal toes or land my partner flop against some royal body; why, just now, when Mrs. Gilmore was dancing with me, some stupid fool tore her frock; as luck would have it, an R. H. thrust his sacred feet into the tear, and before I knew where I was, I found myself towing this royal gentleman round the room by means of my partner's clothes. I could not guess why she had suddenly become so heavy, but when I did realize it, my gracious! I could have wished the earth to swallow me up; there panted his royal highness with rage and lack of breath, and there panted I with horror at the awfulness of the situation, while all around me stood people trying not to laugh. I don't think they would have smiled much if they had been in my shoes; however, I pulled myself together, murmured indistinct apologies, while Mrs. Gilmore courtesied to the very floor, got forgiven at once, because, lucky person, she was a woman, and then glared at me from head to foot before marching majestically off to the cloak-room to be mended; alone. I was the scape-goat, and yet, really, I had not done anything. There is no justice in this world. But I say, do come on," he continued, ignoring the

fact that it was himself and his long-winded story which had caused such delay in their start. "Come along, now, please; let's make hay while the sun shines; there's sure to be plenty of room, now."

With a smile at his naïve impetuosity, Constance followed him, and Sinclair, once again free, lost no time in setting off in search of Florence, from whom he had been so mercilessly torn by her sister. People were going fast now, the ball was nearly over, and it was not long before the house party and a few intimate friends were having a few last words in the almost deserted supper-room. Lord Lynnyear was there, partaking of raised pie, in a grave, bored manner; though, poor man, his face wore a certain expression of relief at having finished his labours of the evening, and able now to throw off the stereotyped smile of welcome which he had been obliged to wear so long. Lady Lynnyear was in high spirits, though rather pale and looking tired, and she was exerting herself to the utmost, talking kindly and graciously to those about her, and with that infinite tact of which she was the fortunate possessor, conveying to all the impression that they had, each one, been very kind and charming to come and spend an evening at her house. A little tact will go a long way towards making one's neighbours happy; what quantities of happiness then are spread around her, by one woman who possesses that greatest of all gifts in any eminent degree. A charm of manner and a tactful mind, two attributes sufficient to

conquer the world and bring all people to her feet! And Lady Lynnyear did conquer all with whom she was brought into contact, and delighted every man or woman who chanced to come beneath her influence. The magic of that sweet voice had wrought more good than much laboured kindness bestowed by less gifted people could ever have accomplished.

Her eldest boy, Lord Garstone, who was paying great attention to Lady Evelyn Fairfax at a little table in the window, resembled rather his father than his mother. He was a youth of two-and-twenty, tall, slight and distingué looking, quiet and grave beyond his years; a fit son to succeed such a father; likely to follow in his footsteps, and one day himself become the cold and handsome counterpart of that kind and noble man. Lady Gertrude Gwyn, the daughter, was tall and handsome, also; few families were so altogether handsome as the Lynnyears and their children. She was a fair type of an English girl; in public, rather shy and reserved; but at home, or amongst her intimate friends, full of high spirits and ready for anything in the shape of amusement and fun. She and her brothers were tremendous allies, and down at Lynnyear she would play cricket with them for a whole afternoon, and generally hold her own pretty well, too. To see her now calmly eating her supper, and answering her partner's questions in terse monosyllables, as if she had little more conversation than a sphinx, one would never guess that she could compete with her brothers at cricket,



and at tennis defeat them as often as they did her; while in the matter of talking, she was capable, single-handed, of reducing them both to silence; and that this was no small feat, will be realized when I tell you that Lord James was as full of talk and high spirits as a champagne-bottle is of fiz; and that his cheery young voice was always to be heard, under all circumstances and at all places. At this moment he was chatting glibly to Cecil about the cricket matches of next week, and rattling on about that important subject as though everyone present must be just as interested in the fate of the Lynnyear Cricket Club as himself; but from the way people listened to him, and smiled at him, I have no doubt but that they were. Or if it was not the cricket which interested them, it was the sound of Jim's voice and the infectious contagion of his cheery, boyish laugh; even his father's rather stern face would unbend in a smile as he looked across at his son, who beamed the very incarnation of health and happiness. He was, indeed, a bright-faced lad, of about nineteen years old—great contrast to his tall, grave brother—his eyes were ever sparkling with fun, and his lips seemed formed for laughter alone. Like all the members of that family, he was handsome, but on rather a different scale; his face lacked that haughty look which seemed the distinctive feature of all that remarkable race. His cheerful, impulsive nature, too, presented a great difference to the colder dispositions of the others; it was this reason, perhaps, which ren-

dered him so much more attractive, and made all people take to him at once; and strangers, visiting for the first time at Lynnyear, perhaps nervous from the anticipation of a certain stiffness they had been told to expect, or awed into unnatural silence by the rather solemn dinner in that vast dining-room, would turn with relief towards Lord James, and to them, frozen by the cold though well-meant hospitality of their host, the warmth and naturalness of the boy's laughter would find an echo in their hearts, in their own every-day laughter, which they had put away out of sight, now that their best behaviour was on view. Nothing was sacred to Jim, not even his father's gravity of demeanour; and often had he appalled the guests by daring to direct his chaff against that awe-inspiring peer, who, in answer, only looked at him with a kind smile from his seat at the head of the table. But by this Lord Lynnyear was proved to be mortal, proved to possess feelings like another, even a lurking sense of humour, which sat well upon that handsome face; the stifled laughter burst forth; people who had hitherto kept silent bubbled over with words; and Jim, by his desperate audacity, had rescued the dinner from oppression and converted that imposing feast into an exceedingly merry meal.

The Courtowns, as I said, were of course amongst those at this late supper party; and at this moment Gerald Drayton was eagerly explaining to them that to-morrow was a great polo day at Hurlingham and they ought to come.

"Lady Lynnyear, you will come, too, won't you?" continued he, turning to their hostess.

"I fear not," answered that lady, thus appealed to. "Hurlingham is not much in my line, and besides which, if it were, we are going down to Lynnyear to-morrow evening. I long to get out of town and enjoy this lovely weather in the country."

"But Hurlingham is country," pursued Gerald—"lovely country. There are flowers, trees and water."

"Yes, and people," put in his Lordship; "and such people!"

"Yes, that's true," assented Gerald; "there are people, and there is sometimes a fearful mob; but you needn't look at them, Lady Lynnyear; all I want you to do is to watch me play polo and never glance at anyone else."

"Well, that's a pretty modest desire," chimed in Constance. "I wonder Lady Lynnyear can resist such a treat; but we shall be there, you know, and, if you don't play well, I shall go away and watch the pigeon-shooting or take unlimited teas on the lawn."

"Oh, Drayton will play all right, Miss Courtown," exclaimed Jim. "You have no idea what a swell he is; he is considered one of the best players in England, isn't he, Captain Sinclair?"

"Oh, shut up, Jim," said Drayton, fairly blushing, while Constance turned and gave him an approving look, which made that young man feel that, if he

ever did play well, to-morrow, with the recollection of that look in his mind, would be the day. "Spare my blushes."

"Oh, well, you needn't blush," answered the lad; "wait till you play cricket; we'll take the conceit out of you then. I know I could bowl you out in the first over; you weren't anywhere near the XI at Eton, so you can't be much good, and cricket's better than polo any day."

"Oh, Jim, do keep quiet," exclaimed Lady Lynnyear, in smiling disapproval; "he *is* so rude, Mr. Drayton," addressing that young man, as though to soothe him, if the words of her son had, by chance, hurt his vanity. Charming Lady Lynnyear, ever thoughtful of another's feelings. But Gerald was not a person to be so easily upset, and seemed quite capable of coping with his youthful antagonist.

"Oh, I don't mind him," he replied; "little boys can't provoke me. Never mind, Jimmy, we'll see about the cricket next week, and we'll have a single-wicket match by ourselves; you shall be umpire, Lady Gertrude; will you?" turning to that young lady.

"Oh, yes, that I will," said she, blushing prettily at being thus suddenly drawn into the conversation; "and if you don't beat Jim, Mr. Drayton, I will never forgive you."

"Well, that's a nice sort of a sister for a fellow to have," exclaimed her brother, appealing to the company generally.

"Now, Lady Lynnyear, we really must be going," said Mrs. Courtown, rising from her seat. "Come, girls, it is fearfully late; and if we really are to see Mr. Drayton play polo to-morrow, or rather this afternoon, we must get some sleep before we start."

A general move and a round of good-nights ensued from this speech, and soon after the Courtowns were speeding on their way home, while the Lynnyear family were left to enjoy their well-earned rest.

CHAPTER IV.

ROTTEN ROW.

THE next morning shone bright and promising, and at one o'clock, Mrs. Courtown, accompanied by Constance and Mona, drove to the park, where their victoria drew up beneath the trees at the end of the Row. Many were the people who came up to speak to them, and it was amusing to watch how Constance received each one according as the mood prompted her. She was all vivacity and life, while Mona, on the contrary, seated beside her mother, leant back in the carriage looking a very dream of beautiful indifference. To her the whole scene appeared as a show, and all those people who contributed to the gay throng were like so many puppets being paraded for her especial benefit. When anyone spoke to her, she roused herself sufficiently to don a stereotyped smile of welcome, and make a faint pretence of interest in the conversation; but it was not till the arrival of Captain Sinclair that she seemed really recalled to the world around her; then, at his hearty greeting, she smiled as though indeed delighted, while responding to his questions with an expression of animation of which a moment before she had seemed utterly incapable. For Cecil

was one of the few men who interested her. There was something in his reserved, grave manner which appealed to the imagination of this beautiful girl in a way that the more cheerful voices of other men ever failed to do. Cecil always seemed in earnest, and if he made a simple remark, appeared to mean it with his whole heart; also, he had a habit of looking straight into the eyes of the person whom he addressed, which compelled their undivided attention. He and Mona were great friends; he believed he understood something of the beautiful nature of this young girl, a nature almost too sweet and delicate for this every-day life, and Cecil would instinctively lower his tones as he spoke to her. Mona, without knowing why, could feel more *en accord* with this man than any she had yet met, and a blush of pleasure would indicate to Cecil that he was no unwelcome visitor. Mona, of course, had observed his devotion to her sister, and she could likewise see that Florence was drawn towards this man, but further than that she troubled her head but little on the subject, as love was to her a thing as yet unknown, as applied to the realities of life, though it may have pictured in many a vivid tale of fiction which her imagination had called into birth. As regards Cecil, she knew only that she liked him as her sister's friend, and also in another way, as her own. When other people bored her, as they mostly did, she would turn to him with a sense of relief, forgetting past troubles in the pleasure of conversing with

a man whose character she felt bound to admire. And this morning she was bored; the young men about their carriage had bored her, their conversation, full of vapid questionings as to why she had not been there last night, when was she going to dance again, what she thought of Lady Sonne's new habit, or of the fact that Mr. Styles had apparently cut out his rival in the affections of that lady yonder with the golden hair, with whom he was now riding; all this she had endeavoured to answer as politely as she was able, but it was with a real sense of relief that she turned to view Cecil's quiet, handsome face, and look straight into those honest eyes while listening to his deep, earnest voice.

"Good morning, Mrs. Courtown," said Sinclair. "Good morning, Miss Mona, good morning," turning to Constance, "how are you after the ball, and where is your sister?"

"Oh, Florence," exclaimed Constance, "is saving herself up for this afternoon; we are going to Hurlingham, as you know, so she is at home with her hair in curl-papers and ice upon her head. You'll see the results this afternoon, if you take the trouble to go down."

"What a shame, Constance," cried Mona. "Poor Florence is rather tired, Captain Sinclair, that is all, and she thought she would be the one to stay at home this morning, so as to have a little quiet before the drive down to Hurlingham after lunch."

"What a kind champion you are, to be sure,"

answered Cecil, turning his gaze full upon the lovely face of the speaker; "no one ever minds what Miss Constance says, you know; but I should like her to malign me, if I thought you would turn round and stick up for me, like you do for Miss Florence."

"I shouldn't dream of doing that," laughed Mona, "I feel quite sure of your ability to take care of yourself. Did you have a good time last night?" she continued.

"Yes, I enjoyed myself very much," said Cecil gravely, as though stating an important and startling fact. "I don't know when I liked a ball as much as I did last night, but then—"

"Yes, that's it," interrupted Constance, who had caught the last part of the sentence, "you stuck to the stars and stripes; that's what you were going to say, isn't it, Captain Sinclair? at least that's what you ought to have said, if you wished to be *galant*."

"Well, I confess to something of the sort," answered Cecil, smiling, "but really, Miss Constance, it is no use trying to make pretty speeches in your hearing, if you anticipate me and take the words out of my mouth like that."

"Well, you see, I know all about compliments," laughed the girl. "Practice makes perfect, and I get so many paid me during the day, that I always know exactly what you men are going to say before you utter. It really makes life very monotonous; oh! for an original man! What do you say, Mr. Drayton?" turning to that gentleman, who had just

reined in his pony alongside the carriage; "don't you think it great nonsense?"

"What's nonsense?" asked Gerald, lifting his hat, "but never mind telling me," he added, "of course it's nonsense, since you say so. I agree with you, whatever the question, for I am sure you must be right, or, what is the same thing," he put in slyly, "you yourself are sure you're right."

"Oh, really now, you have just proved me right," said Constance. "I was saying that all compliments were nonsense, and all men always said the same things, and as if to prove my words, up you come with a ready-made compliment on the tip of your tongue; but as to the last part of your remark, why, it was downright rude, so, having disgraced yourself, you may just as well trot your pony away, as we don't want you here."

"Oh, I didn't mean to make you angry," said Gerald, pleadingly. "Please forgive me, Miss Constance; you know you are coming down to see me play polo this afternoon, and it will make me play so badly if we are not friends."

"As if you really cared," exclaimed the young lady, slightly mollified. "Well, I'll forgive you this time, but only on one condition."

"And what is that?" said Gerald, eagerly.

"The condition that you get a goal for your side this afternoon; unless you do that, I won't make it up; and, till you have got that goal, you mustn't dream of speaking to me again."

"Oh, I'll get the goal right enough," said Gerald, cheerily; "but if I don't, and you know one often does play without getting a goal," he continued, dolefully, "what am I to do, then, Miss Constance?"

"Do!" exclaimed his inexorable tormentor; "why, remain in Coventry, I suppose; but if you don't think yourself capable of doing what I propose, well, just say so and—"

"Oh, do not say any more," exclaimed Gerald, reddening, with wounded vanity and pride. "I'll get a goal, Miss Courtown, or know the reason why;" and raising his hat rather stiffly, in a bow which included the whole party, he touched his pony with his heel and was soon lost to view among the crowd of riders in the distance.

"How cruel you are," exclaimed Mona, as soon as he was gone. "I wonder that man can stand it; you are so unkind to him. How will you feel if he meets with an accident this afternoon, trying to do what you told him to do; why, it is quite possible; there was a look of determination on Mr. Drayton's face as he rode away, which showed he really felt your words and meant to exert himself, this afternoon, to his very utmost."

"Well, and that's just what I intend he should do," said Constance. "I love to make a man mad, and to touch his vanity is the only way to do it; and, as to anything happening to him, that's impossible. We all know that Mr. Drayton is about the best polo player in England," with a ring of pride in

her voice as she asserted this fact; "so, he is not likely to come to harm. Now, Mama, if we want to get any lunch before we go and see the match, we had better be going home."

A moment later the coachman gathered up his horses, and the victoria sped out at Hyde Park corner en route for home.

CHAPTER V.

HURLINGHAM.

THE sun was shining brightly upon the beautiful green lawns of Hurlingham. The flowers were in their prime; but they had rivals for the palm of beauty, in the moving panorama of colours which stretched across the promenade, blue, crimson, scarlet and gold, every colour of the rainbow, almost, was represented in that restless crowd of human butterflies.

The crowd was not a select one. Hurlingham is too easy of entrance for that, but all the better for the beauty of the scene, or rather, the faces which adorned it, for it is not always the select ones who wear the most gorgeous garments, nor does it follow of necessity that Lady Clara Vere de Vere is "a thing of beauty, or a joy for ever." On the contrary, some of the most beautiful faces are to be met with by the chance traveller in the London streets; a journey by train, or even a ride in that most plebeian of conveyances, a 'bus, may often lead to the discovery of a face so lovely that the haughtiest of ladies might gaze enviously upon it with reluctant admiration—some face that knows naught of Vere de Vere, but blushes unseen, the joy and sunlight of a poor or humble

home, now crossing the path of the traveller like some sudden sunbeam on his way, then passing by to the dim obscurity from which it sprang.

Many a pretty maiden has been enabled to bear the supercilious scrutiny of her so-called betters, by the inner consciousness that, if she were not fair, those betters would not trouble to glance at all, disparaging as those glances be.

And here, at Hurlingham, "this awful crowd," as Lady Clara contemptuously terms it, contains a variety of loveliness sufficient in numbers to turn green with envy all the Lady Claras whom Norman blood has ever yet produced. In no country in the world are so many pretty people to be found as in London. I speak advisedly, for I have an eye for the beautiful, and have sought it the wide world over, in every country that there be; and at Hurlingham on this fine Saturday afternoon, there flitted in and out amongst the trees, along the lawn, or wandered by the river and round the little tents upon the open promenade, enough of beauty, enough of loveliness, to make glad the heart of man, as he looked around him lost in admiration; but there is safety in numbers, and this particular man who was looking about, bowing to those he knew, and losing his heart to each successive "little darling" as he termed it, that passed them by, was a young man of a susceptible nature, none other than our youthful friend Charlie Summers.

"Really, Mr. Summers," exclaimed Constance in a

tone of feigned annoyance, what you can see in that girl beats me," following his eyes to where a young lady, seated in a tent, was carrying on a most animated conversation with a tall, soldier-like man; "why, she has no figure; and, heavens!—look at her hat! well, if that's your taste, I feel quite pearl-like in your company."

"Oh! I say, what fun you are, Miss Courtown," laughed Charlie. "I only wanted to see who Arthur Delane had got hold of; he seems awfully devoted, too; but she is rather pretty, don't you think so?" he added. "Come now, Miss Courtown, anyone so beautiful as you are can afford to be generous and admire."

"Nonsense," answered Constance, rather shortly, "don't pay me compliments, and don't ask me to admire a girl who is all hat and no waist, like that," jerking her head in the direction of the tent. "But if you want to go," she added, loftily, "pray, do not mind me. I dare say, your friend Mr. Delane will present you; he may be dying for an excuse to get away himself."

Charlie turned round and looked at his companion, rather puzzled to find that she really was slightly cross; as a rule, her temper was so very equable that he could not bring himself to believe that the mere fact of his admiring a pretty girl could have the effect of upsetting anyone so universally amiable as Constance. He felt there must be some other cause beyond his ken, and, as he was wont to tell himself,

when people are out of sorts, it is best to leave them alone, he followed out this wise maxim, and, vouchsafing no answer, walked along in silence.

The fact was, that Constance *was* cross; she hardly liked to own it to herself, and yet it was so. While crossing the lawn they had met Gerald, all ready and got up for polo; and he had merely lifted his cap, scarcely looking at her, and then passed on. She had told him not to speak to her, it is true; but with feminine inconsistency she argued that he need not have taken her meaning so awfully *au pied de la lettre*; he might have known that she was only anxious to see him distinguish himself, and, of course, common civility demanded that he should come up and speak to her before the game began. But he did not; he had walked on just as if he scarcely saw her, and she was furious with him. "Well," she said to herself, "if he takes things so seriously he will be sorry for it, when he finds that I can take things seriously too; and if he does not get that goal, I will keep my word and never speak to him again, no—never." And with that relentless resolution in her heart, she turned round and, as people do when angry with themselves, vented her ill-humour upon the person nearest to her, and that unfortunate happened to be the gay and debonair Charlie Summers, who was always so jolly and always so bright, and it was no easy matter to be cross with such an aggravatingly good-humoured individual, but Constance intended to be disagreeable to him, and so far succeeded that, as I

said above, they were walking along in silence, a most unusual circumstance for a couple generally so chatty and communicative. After a few moments of this lugubrious state of things, poor Charlie could bear it no more, and turning round presented to his companion a countenance so full of humility and contrition, that Constance, realising the ludicrous side of the situation, immediately burst out into a hearty laugh, in which, as may be imagined, she was soon joined by Charlie, who was only too delighted at such an easy pardon, without troubling to inquire into what had been his original fault. Constance was the first to speak.

"Come, Mr. Summers," she said, "let us join the others and secure a good seat to see the game. I am tremendously interested in this match, aren't you? Do you think Mr. Drayton's side will win?" she added, in a half reluctant tone, as though hating herself for asking the question.

"Well, they ought to," he replied; "chiefly because it *is* Drayton's side. He is an awfully good player, as you know; and, though the other side is pretty good, they haven't got anyone as good as he is."

After a search through the crowd they came upon Mrs. Courtown and Florence, with Captain Sinclair in attendance.

"Here you are," exclaimed the latter, as they approached; "here are two seats for you; we have had the greatest difficulty in keeping them."

"Thanks," said Constance, dropping languidly into the nearest one; "don't you wish you were playing, Captain Sinclair?"

"Wish it," he exclaimed; "yes, indeed I do; the day is perfect, and it makes me so keen looking on that I can hardly sit still in my chair. I long to rush out and join in the game."

"Well, that's polite to me, at any rate," said Florence, in a low voice; "for I had flattered myself that you were quite happy where you are; but if you really want to go—"

"My dear Miss Courtown," answered Cecil, in a quiet, distressed tone; "it is unlike you to speak like that. You know that I am happy here in your company, and that," striving to look into her downcast eyes—as his fashion was, and speaking more tenderly than she had ever yet heard—"and that I would give all—"

"Ah, they have begun," cried Constance, breaking in on their conversation in a tone of excitement; "look! oh, what a lovely pony Mr. Drayton is on, isn't he, Florence?"

But Florence did not answer; she was at that moment nearer hating her sister than she had ever thought possible. What were Mr. Drayton and his pony to her! and leaning back in her chair in silence, she proceeded to look on at the game as though, in so doing, she felt that she was stretching her good-nature to a point. But Cecil, ever ready, and, concealing the share of vexation which he not unnatur-

ally felt, told Constance all he knew about Gerald's pony, where he had got him from, and who it was had first broken him in for the game. But Constance scarcely listened to him; she was really watching the game with breathless interest. Could it be that she was getting too fond of Gerald ? she asked herself. Oh, stuff ! she exclaimed, to this inward voice ; was it likely ? He was an agreeable companion, that was all, and, of course, she was at this moment interested in him because of the conversation that morning. She almost wished she hadn't said what she had about his getting a goal ; but then the excitement of wondering whether he would was quite too lovely for words.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POLO MATCH.

OUR party were not the only ones who followed the course of the game. Many of the players had friends and sympathisers amongst that gay crowd, and more than one heart beat faster as the sides charged towards the ball or became locked together in one moving mass. The sides appeared most evenly matched, and neither had as yet obtained any advantage over the other. At last there seemed an opening; the ball lay alone in the middle of the ground, not far from the opposite goal, when Gerald, by a quicker turn of his pony than any of the others were able to execute, got his head round and started him off full gallop towards the ball. At the same moment one of his adversaries made for that very point. There were two minutes of perfect silence; two minutes of awful suspense as to which player should first reach the ball; both had the same distance to traverse, and, as far as could be seen, both arrived at the desired spot at the same moment; but, as Gerald reined in his pony, the animal swerved, the pony of his adversary cannoned into him, and, in another second, all four, the two men and the two ponies, were lying in a confused mass upon the ground.

Oh, the suspense and anxiety of that moment! to her dying day Constance will remember the various phases of feeling she went through while those four figures lay motionless on the ground. The two ponies slowly struggled to their feet, then one of the men rose and tottered forward—the crowd of players had got to them now and shut them in from sight—had the other figure got up? Was he hurt? was asked on every side. But no one could answer, till reply came in the form of two men, bearing a litter towards the fatal spot. And then it was rumoured that Gerald Drayton was killed, that his pony had kicked him on the head, and they were bearing him away dead from the ground.

Poor Constance grew, herself, pale as death, though of course she had had nothing to do with the accident. Her foolish words of that morning came back to her, and she felt as though she had goaded Gerald to his doom. Now she knew that he was more to her than she had ever before realised; now that he was lost to her, she valued that silent devotion which, when it was ever with her, she had held so cheap.

“I’ll go and find out what has happened to the poor chap,” said Sinclair, the first to speak after the bearers of that ghastly burden had passed beyond their sight. “Maybe he is only stunned, after all,” he added, striving to hide his own anxiety, so as not to alarm the others. “I will inquire; you all stay here till I return.” So saying, he was gone.

Neither of the girls had as yet spoken a word, and Constance sat silent and still, with a set expression of mute suffering upon her usually cheerful face, ready to hear his fate, or rather, her fate; for was not her life wrapped up in his that had perhaps departed ?

After a few moments of almost unbearable anxiety Sinclair returned, and the smile upon his handsome face acted like magic on those three women, who had been so miserably awaiting the words he brought. At once they knew that their worst fears were not realised; there was hope, there was life.

"Yes, it's all right," cried Cecil, while still some paces off; poor Gerald was only very severely stunned, and knocked senseless by the shock. "He has just come to, and the moment he caught sight of me, he called out, 'I'm all right, old boy; did our friends see me go over ?' So I told him you had sent me, to find out how he was, and he begged me to thank you for thinking of him, and bade me tell you, Miss Constance, as he had promised you he would get a goal this afternoon, he intended to come out again in a few minutes and get it."

"Oh, how thankful I am he is not badly hurt, but it seems a miracle he was not killed," said Mrs. Courtown; while Florence looked her thanks for the good news and rewarded the messenger with a smile of gratitude, which amply repaid that bringer of good tidings.

Constance said nothing, she could not if she would; there was a lump in her throat, and oh, such glad

thankfulness in her heart! She turned away her head to hide what she was feeling and also two great tears, that would well forth beneath her long lashes. How dark to her had seemed that same scene at which she now appears to be so intently gazing, though in reality her look pierces far beyond those shading trees and glorious sky. To others she is still a cheerful young lady of fashion, looking rather languidly at the beauties of nature all around; to herself she is nought but a miserable girl, half choked with emotion and overcome with a great joy, pouring out her thanks to One who sits above, the one omnipotent Being who, in his great benevolence, had just saved her a future of lifelong pain and remorse.

"How lovely it is here; how cool and beautiful the air after the heat of town," said Florence, the first to break the silence.

Ah, lovely indeed it was; but that self-same beauty had but lately seemed to them as the gloom before the storm, as death before the grave. Now all was changed; now all was bright. The beauty of what we look upon depends upon ourselves; a joyous mind and gladsome heart can find something to admire in the most unattractive landscape that ever has been seen, while, to one weighed down with sorrow, the birds may sing in vain, the flowers may blossom and the trees waft grateful breezes, it is all the same—all is dark, all is miserable.

But, while I am moralising thus, our little party has quite recovered from the temporary depression

consequent upon the accident to Gerald Drayton; the game is once more in full swing and the other side—the side that Constance little short of hates—is distinctly getting the best of it. At that moment a figure is seen mounting a pony just outside the house into which the disabled player had been so lately carried. The pony is turned towards the ground, and, brandishing his polo stick, the rider appears coming forward as though to take part in the game.

"It is—yes, it *is* Mr. Drayton," exclaimed Constance, aloud, as though she had been looking for his coming all along, and, now that he came, scarcely able to recognise in him the man they had so lately seen carried senseless from the field.

"By Jove, but he *is* a good, plucked-un," muttered Sinclair, under his breath, while a faint cheer from his friends greeted Gerald's reappearance in the field.

"How ever can he do it, I wonder," said Mrs. Courtown. "I am sure he oughtn't to play any more."

But Gerald himself apparently did not seem to think so, for, acknowledging the congratulations of his friends by just raising his round cap, he galloped on to the ground and was soon busy on the game before him.

It can well be imagined that Constance watched the game as she had never watched polo before, and no movement of the pony which bore Gerald Dray-

ton was missed by her attentive gaze; and when, presently, the ball lay in almost precisely the same spot as it had before the accident, and Gerald and one of his opponents started towards it exactly as they had done before, she fairly held her breath with excitement, while the colour fled from her cheeks as she craned forward to see what would happen. What happened was this: Gerald, having got a slight start, reached the ball first, struck it out of the path of his adversary, and then, following it up with one vigorous and well-directed stroke, drove the white ball right between the goal posts of the enemy.

He had done her bidding—he had scored a goal, but only just in time, for in another moment “time” was called and Gerald was reining his pony up alongside of her chair, and, raising his cap, exclaimed, “Now we must be friends, Miss Courtown, as I have got you a goal.”

“Shake hands” and “thank you” was all that Constance said.

But as Gerald turned round to receive the more lengthy congratulations of the rest of the party, I think he understood that he was pardoned, and that he valued at their true worth those two short sentences, which, though they said so little, conveyed so much.

Since the above incident may be deemed improbable, I have permission to recall the fact that while playing in a match at Hurlingham, in the summer of '85, Captain Hone, of the 7th Hussars, met with an accident, breaking two ribs and being otherwise severely injured. Towards the close of the game he reappeared, and by a splendid piece of play won the match for his side.

AUTHOR.

CHAPTER VII.

LYNNYEAR CASTLE.

SOME few days after the events recorded in the last chapter, a carriage rolled through the gates of the drive leading to Lynnyear Castle. In the carriage sat Mrs. Courtown and her three daughters. This was their first visit to an English country-house, thus they had all looked forward with some anticipation to seeing how the English live in the country; and it was with no little curiosity they waited to observe how people who in London were always rushing about from place of amusement to place of amusement, managed to support existence in the quiet of a rural home. Not that the Lynnyears were people who sought after anything but peace and quiet; it was easy enough to picture them leading tranquil lives in the castle of their ancestors; but the butterflies, the society people, of whom there would be some among the present party, what did they do with themselves? how did they behave when afar from their beloved Piccadilly and the excitements of town? They had yet to learn, as most foreigners have to do, that, though in town people may appear cockneys to the very core, wedded to town and all that pertains to life in a great city, yet

it is appearance only; and that every true Englishman is more at home a hundred times in the glorious country of his lovely island, revelling in the green fields and gardens of flowers, when it is summer, and delighting to plod through the long, wet turnips in pursuit of game, or ready to negotiate the stiffest of fences, upon the back of his horse, when it is winter. Away from town the proud unbend, the languid awaken and the depressed become light-hearted. The view is bright, the air is pure. Healthy exercise results in healthy bodies and healthy minds; the former bring peace, the latter good-will; the two combined produce content. True happiness is a negative quality; content and happiness are one.

The approach to Lynnyear Castle was one of the chief features of the place. The lodge gates exactly faced the house, and a long, straight road, a mile in length, led directly up to the entrance. But what a road! On either side of it were avenues of towering trees, in the full glory of their summer foliage. Amongst these avenues gathered herds of frightened deer, darting hither and thither, pushing and trampling upon one another as the sound of wheels disturbed their afternoon repose. On the left of the drive lay the wire fence, which enclosed vast shrubberies, whose shady depths suggested winding paths and fragrant flowers, the latter protected from the incursions of their ruthless foes, the rabbits, by that impenetrable netting, which glistened brightly in the sun. Beyond the shrubberies rose high, uniform

walls of bricks and mortar; walls which, to the initiated, made the palate picture imaginary visions of that great load of fruit known to be growing upon the further side, for this was the kitchen garden, far-famed through all the county for its glorious show of peaches and of grapes. What fortunes, sometimes, are these great enclosures, full of fruit, to the peculating gardener, who sits in state and views, with disgust, every person who ventures to gather one of his golden treasures, be that robber an honoured guest or even the privileged son of his wealthy employer.

Apropos of the Lynnyear grapes, there is a story that, on the occasion of a party given by Lady Lynnyear in town, and the hamper of fruit not arriving from Lynnyear, as was expected, his lordship volunteered to go to Covent Garden market to purchase the required dessert, and was directed by his housekeeper to a certain shop, where she frequently bought grapes for the house. On arriving there he was about to select some grapes which took his fancy, when the vender stopped him, saying: "You had better wait, sir; we are expecting momentarily our hamper of grapes from Lynnyear Castle, which, as you probably know, produces the finest grapes that are grown."

"From Lynnyear?" exclaimed his lordship, aghast.

"Yes, sir," continued the man, proud of his connection with such an aristocratic vinery; "his lordship's gardener, Mr. Perkins, sends us up a hamper

of grapes daily, and most of them we generally sell to a Mrs. Jones, who is housekeeper at one of the big houses in Grosvenor Square. I think she is our best customer."

"Mrs. Jones!" gasped Lord Lynnyear, "why, my housekeeper—why—" And as the facts of the case burst upon him, that ordinarily most equable nobleman grew positively angry, which was proved by his hurrying—a thing he had never done before—to the nearest telegraph office, and wiring to the astonished Mr. Perkins just five words:—"D——n you, I dismiss you."

But that garden wall was so suggestive of the grapes beyond it, and my recollections of those grapes are so greatly mingled with recollections of Mr. Perkins, who used to stand guard over that delicious fruit whenever I appeared upon the scene—seeming to us to have eyes in the back of his head, when we thought he was not looking—that I could not help wandering away from my subject to gloat over the story of my enemy's discomfiture; and my subject, I believe, was the road from the lodge to the castle, and it was upon the left-hand side that I wandered off into the shrubberies, through the shrubberies to the garden wall, and over that wall to the array of houses where dwell those juicy treasures, and where once dwelt Mr. Perkins. Well, there is small fear of my wandering off the path on the right-hand side, for there, stretches a long sheet of water sparkling and shimmering in the July sun,

while here and there the water-lilies repose gracefully in patches upon its surface, conveying to the dusty travellers a sense of coolness combined with repose, which I always consider to be the peculiar property of these amphibious blossoms. Beyond this lake were cows lazily chewing the cud, and amusing themselves by aiming gentle blows at the too attentive flies with the ragged ends of their long and rather dirty tails, as a pleasing variety to the monotony of their everlasting post-prandial occupation. Cows do eat, I suppose, but when? I never caught one at it, for whenever I met a cow it was always engaged in placidly reviving recollections of its latest meal, sure proof that it had eaten, and perhaps largely too, though I had not been there to see. On the other side of these particular cows lay an expanse of green—grass and trees, trees and grass, as far as the eye could reach—gradually sloping upwards, till the view was arrested by a formidable looking hill, from the summit of which could be seen, it was said, more counties than you could name, besides scores of little village clumps, nestling cosily in the sheltered valleys beneath.

Though I have been the wide world over, as I mentioned above, when asserting that for female beauty England held the palm, for the beauties of nature, though I have seen grander sights, perhaps, and scenery ten times more magnificent and imposing, yet have I never looked upon a landscape more peacefully beautiful, more comfortable, as it were, to

a weary mind, than that coup d'œil which one gets as the carriage rolls through the lodge gates towards Lynnyear Castle. And this the Courtowns evidently thought, also, judging from the exclamations of delighted admiration which burst from their lips as the glory of the scene was revealed to them.

Mona alone said nothing, but sat gazing dreamily around her, with a look of rapt pleasure upon her exquisite features; such a look as might wear the angels, when catching first glimpses of a promised Paradise. But this silent enjoyment was soon broken by the carriage drawing up before the long flight of broad steps which led to the house, and in a few moments Mrs. Courtown and her daughters were being welcomed by their hostess in a cosy little sitting-room, which opened out on to the garden, where beneath the trees stood small tea-tables, around which were gathered the rest of the family and some of the earlier arrivals.

Thither Lady Lynnyear led her guests, and after the first greetings were over, they found themselves reclining in easy-chairs, partaking of that grateful cup of tea which is so indispensable to the average female mind, or rather, body, after a journey by train; but I am not sure that I ought not to have said mind; for it is not till a woman has settled herself after a first arrival, that she can feel at ease and equal to the task of sustaining her share of the conversation around her. And this settling comprises a comfortable chair, people to wait upon her, a

consciousness that despite her recent travelling she is looking as well as her neighbours, besides monopolising the greatest amount of attention as being the latest arrival, and, a cup of tea, the latter not necessarily to assuage thirst, but to hold in the hand, sip, and look fascinatingly over the brim as the cup is conveyed to rosy lips.

And the three Misses Courtown, as they sipped, whether it were for purposes of mental arrangement or real *bona fide* thirst, certainly looked as bewitching a trio as ever settled to their tea beneath the trees of an English lawn. At least I am only quoting the opinion of many in that little party.

Jimmy was eagerly telling Captain Sinclair the details of the programme for to-morrow's cricket; Lord Ringwood was lazily lounging upon the grass, his straw hat tilted over his eyes; Lady Tarragon, a rather prim-looking matron, was laying some injunction upon her husband, who gave one the impression of a somewhat henpecked man. Percy Carruthers, a youth, one of Jimmy's college friends, was smoking a cigarette, and apparently happy in the absorbing occupation of digging up a root of dandelions which happened to be within his reach. Lady Gertrude and a Miss Curtis were playing tennis in the distance with Mr. Creighton, the curate, and another of Jimmy's boy, or perhaps he would prefer me to say, young men, friends. Gerald Drayton and Charlie Summers had not yet ar-

rived, but were expected down in time for dinner.

After some desultory conversation a general move was made; Lady Lynnyear and Mrs. Courtown went in-doors, Lady Tarragon led her husband off to assist in choosing flowers for her hair, while Jimmy suggested a little walk before it was time to dress for dinner, if the Misses Courtown were not tired. Of course they were not, and Captain Sinclair and Florence, having already started off, as couples do at the first signs of such a suggestion, not caring to trust these matters to chance, Constance selected Jimmy as most likely to amuse her, saying: "Come along, Lord James, I want you to show me all that is worth looking at, and tell me where to find some roses for this evening."

"All right, Miss Constance, I'll guide you," cried the boy. "There is a lovely walk just beyond the lake there; we call it the lovers' walk. Shall we go there and see if it has any effect upon our affections?"

"Yes, if you like," answered Constance, laughing. "You are so young, I don't mind your making love to me a bit; you are only a boy, you know—quite a child."

"That's what I told him, Miss Courtown," said Lord Ringwood, looking up languidly from under the brim of his hat; "and he actually got quite insulted, didn't you, Jimmy? Never mind, old boy, you'll grow out of it, you know. Why, I was young

once, I really was," asseverated his lordship, as though stating an improbable fact. "And if only I were that age now, and it weren't so hot, I'd come with you to the lovers' walk myself, Miss Courtown—I really would."

"You!" exclaimed Constance; "why, you're much too lazy. I believe you were born tired, and were even too languid to cry during babyhood. Really, I might have liked you then; a baby that didn't cry must have been such a novelty!"

"Yaas," drawled Ringwood, "those were my best days; but I have been getting more bored and more tired ever since, and really, life is very wearing, don't you think so?"

"Poor thing," answered Constance, "I do pity you; but it's better you should be bored alone than that you should bore me; so come along, Lord James, let's leave this poor martyr to rest himself before dinner; and mind, we shall expect you to be quite brilliant by then, Lord Ringwood."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LOVERS' WALK.

BUT the lovers' walk, whither they bent their way, was already tenanted, for Captain Sinclair and Florence had somehow found their way thither. It was a walk, perhaps, not unknown to the former, who had been a frequent visitor at the castle, and it is not unlikely that he had more than once played the part of lover in those shady woods; but then it was playing a part only, and, though his speeches had been well turned and his eyes as expressive as eyes on these occasions should be, yet he had never for one moment expected to be taken seriously on such a subject. A laugh at an inopportune moment, or a twinkle in his eye when no twinkle should be there, were always quite sufficient to destroy the illusion and demonstrate to his companion of the moment that he was sure they both understood each other, that what they were saying was but a species of game, a pastime to occupy and interest the present hour—and she did understand. People who permit themselves to flirt are generally quick of comprehension. It is a game of give and take, and, in the matter of taking, a hint of this kind is seldom thrown away. But during this particular walk, Cecil was far from thinking

of flirtation. For the first time in his life he was in earnest as regards the tender passion. It was a fitting retribution that he, who had so often played with fire, should now be burnt himself by those self-same flames. These two walked along for some time in silence; a silence indicative of mutual sympathy, enabling each to feel that there is something soothing in the companionship of the other, their thoughts in harmony, their feelings one; neither inclined to speak and break that stillness which, for a time, is the greatest tribute of affection that both could pay. Cecil was the first to end the silence.

"Miss Courtown," he said, "there is something so quiet and tranquil in this spot, that it almost saddens me with a feeling of my own personal want of worth."

"Not such an unpleasant feeling, either," answered Florence with a smile. "It takes the conceit out of one, which is good for all of us, you know."

"Yes, true; but yet there are times when a man needs all the conceit to which he can lay claim, times when a sense of inferiority is a most disagreeable sensation; when a man is anxious to appear at his best, it is surely handicapping him very greatly to put him in a place like this, where he does not feel able to shine, or do himself all the justice he can manage to collect."

"Why on earth do you want to appear at your best here, Captain Sinclair?" answered Florence, with a little quaver of hesitation in her voice, as

though she had some insight to where this preface tended. "There is no one here but me, and I won't look at you, so never mind the vanity; I dare say it will all come back at dinner time."

"But that will not suit me at all," answered Cecil suddenly, stopping in his walk and turning his earnest gaze full upon the face of his companion, "good or bad, vain or modest, I want you to look at me; if ever I wished to appear good in any eyes in this world, surely those eyes are yours; so you will look at me, Miss Courtown, won't you?" he pleaded.

"What nonsense, Captain Sinclair. I'll look at you, if you want me to, of course," giving him one quick glance, then looking down at the green moss at her feet, "but really, you mustn't talk like that. I thought you and I were far too good friends for that kind of thing; that is why I have liked you so much. For though they tell me you have made love to every woman you ever met, yet to me you have always talked as though I were a rational being."

"*Made* love, yes, that's the expression, Florence," answered Cecil gently. "That exactly describes the manner in which I used to manufacture it as the occasion demanded. But surely you know that I would not insult *you* by offering any such counterfeit sham. Oh, dearest, look at me!" and at the ring of feeling in his manly voice, a feeling that none would have credited that stern man with having

possessed, the girl turned and let her gaze look straight into those kind eyes, which had never yet withdrawn themselves from her face.

"Yes, that is right," continued Cecil. "Now look me through and through; if ever truth was visible to human being, I think, dear, that at this moment you must see it in my eyes. Do they look false? do they shun your gaze? No, never will they—now or at any future time. Oh, my darling," he went on, in a voice of ineffable tenderness, that fairly caused the hand he now held to tremble. "Darling, I love you; what more can man say? what more would you have me say? In those three words is everything. I love you, heart and soul; love you as I, sceptic that I have been, never thought possible I could love any woman in this world. I am poor, Florence; I have little to offer you. Refuse me and you will have offers innumerable. Your sweet face will attract the rich, the noble and the best amongst mankind; but, Florence, believe it, dear, never will any one of these love you with the strong, firm passion that I, my loved one, feel for you. Oh, Florence, answer me: is it to be yes and happiness, or no and everlasting grief? I wait your verdict."

With quivering lids, although her eyes were still fixed upon those that looked her through and through, as though to read her answer even before she uttered it, Florence had listened to this eloquent appeal; and then, her face illumined with a great

joy, which she did not even strive to conceal, she bent forward, and blushing deeply, answered simply, "Yes."

Transported, Cecil drew her towards him and gently kissed those yielding lips.

"Darling, I thank you," he said. "I am not worthy; but never shall you regret this day."

And though the course of true love seldom yet ran smooth, and though those who plight their troth may in after life be severed, I doubt if any one who has blindly loved, fondly adored, ever *did* regret that day when, hand in hand together, for the first time the flood of a great passion swept across their hearts, drowning, in its course, all former troubles, all bygone ills, passing away, to leave in their place, peace and thankfulness, a grateful sense of perils past and safety won; for a time at least a storm-beat bark has weathered the gale and reached a harbour of refuge; though it should be only for one delusive moment, that moment is remembered forever and for aye, remaining a landmark in the flight of years, a sunbeam on the sands of time.

When Florence Courtown went in to dress for dinner on that her first evening at Lynnyear, there was a smile upon her lips and a joy in her heart which caused such happiness to beam upon her face that Constance, coming into the room while the maid was doing her hair, could not but notice the expression which looked back at her from the glass, so gladsome and so bright.

"Well, Florence," she remarked, "you *do* look pleased. What is it, dear? Are you, like myself, enchanted with this lovely place; is it not all quite lovely? I took a walk with Lord James before I came in, and he shewed me a path called the Lover's Walk—an ideal spot—just the place for a proposal; you must go and see it to-morrow; it almost makes one sentimental to be there."

"Is it so very pretty?" replied Florence, the tell-tale colour mounting to her cheeks. "Perhaps I saw it, as Captain Sinclair and I came across such a path, just the sort of place you describe, and we both agreed that it was lovely."

"Did you?" said Constance, with an arch look. "What, both of you? Ah, perhaps—" But at this moment the dinner-gong sounded, and Florence, only too glad to escape from the scrutiny of her sister, exclaimed:

"Oh, there's the gong; we mustn't be late. Go down, Con, and say I'll be ready in a minute."

CHAPTER IX.

DINNER.

WHEN the sisters had reached the drawing-room most of the company were already assembled—people were standing rather uncomfortably about, rigidly upright, expecting and hoping for the entrance of the portly butler to announce the serving of dinner. Gerald Drayton was there, and Charlie Summers, also Sir Timothy Trueman, all three of whom had arrived by the last train from town. The latter was a youth of two-and-twenty, the possessor of a large fortune inherited a year ago, which fortune he was dividing as quickly as he was able amongst his impecunious companions and the book-makers on the turf. He was a youth with a vacuous countenance, a high collar, and a still higher belief in himself, which belief chiefly showed itself in the idea that he knew the world and was “well up to the ropes,” to use his own slang, in all matters pertaining to the rapid side of life. He certainly had some experience—if a year’s expensive teaching counted as such. Gerald and Charlie were both in high spirits, talking to each person as he or she entered the room, and generally having it all their own way, as the new-comers in a party often do. When dinner

was at length announced, the procession formed, and started in double file for the dining-hall. The Marquis led off with prim Lady Tarragon, Lord Tarragon fell to the lot of Mrs. Courtown, Mona paired with Cecil, Constance with Gerald, and Florence with Charlie Summers, Miss Curtis was taken in by the experienced Sir Timothy, Lady Gertrude was obliged to put up with the Honorable "Billy" Lomax, a noisy man who posed for a wit, now asked more on account of his cricket than his amiability; Lady Lynnyear was escorted by the languid Lord Ringwood, and Jimmy; Percy Carruthers and "Fairy" Murton brought up the rear. The latter were two college friends of Jim's. Percy Carruthers was the young gentleman who, when we first met him, was concentrating his energies upon the extermination of a dandelion, and "Fairy" Murton was a bright lad fresh from school; very keen at cricket, rather shy, and with the face and complexion of a girl, which appearance had gained him the nickname of "Fairy."

Although seemingly a large party, when seated at table they but formed a tiny speck in the centre of that vast hall. The dining-hall really was immense, and gave an idea of almost unlimited space, for one end of it was entirely open, leading into the outer hall beyond. A gallery ran round the opposite end, while on either side the walls were covered with trophies of arms, and below, ranged round the foot of these, stood grim, motionless figures of knights in full armour. In strange contrast to them were the

half-dozen footmen, with powdered heads and gorgeous in stockings and plush, who were being directed from afar by a pompous butler and his lieutenant the groom of the chambers.

My lord's own man stood behind the Marquis's chair; thus altogether the attendants presented quite a formidable array, and yet to the maids, who were doubtless slyly peeping from the gallery above, the whole group appeared to fill a very small portion of that great room. The reason why I say the maids were doubtless peeping from above, is because I am almost certain that they were; for it was once told me that when maids and gentlemen's gentlemen visit a country-house in attendance on their masters and mistresses, when going into supper they each severally take precisely the same precedence as that accorded to the people whom they serve. Thus the butler would take in the maid of a countess, while the less fortunate attendant of Miss Delamere Jones would, as a matter of course, be relegated to some junior footman, more amusing than the butler perhaps, but still not nearly so "swagger" in point of position. To regulate this procession No. 2, the maids are obliged to watch procession No. 1. Therefore I repeat that I am almost certain that the maids at Lynnyear on this particular evening were craning their necks through the balustrades of the dark gallery above the hall.

When the party was first settled, it seemed as though every one were talking at once; but when

presently there came a pause, Gerald Drayton was heard to ask Lady Lynnyear if she knew, among their neighbours, a man who answered to the description of fat and podgy, fair whiskers, pale face and irritable voice.

"Well!" answered she, laughing, "that is certainly not a very flattering portrait, but I must say it reminds me of a Sir James Galley, who has a place not very far from here. But why do you ask?"

"Well," said Gerald, "you had better ask Mr. Summers, for I expect Sir James and he won't forget each other in a hurry. Tell the story, Charlie."

"Oh, there's nothing to tell," replied that individual, "merely a little difference of opinion between your neighbour and myself, Lady Lynnyear, because he tried to make me late for dinner, but it resulted in Sir James—is that his name?—being late for his own dinner. I expect Lady Galley—if there is one—is waiting for him now."

"There *is* a Lady Galley, and a very nice one too; but what do you mean by his trying to make you late for dinner?"

"Oh, ask Gerald, Lady Lynnyear; you will think me so greedy if I tell you how desperate I became at the thoughts of losing this excellent meal."

"Well, Mr. Drayton, what's the story?"

"Oh," replied Gerald, grinning even at the recollection of this afternoon's occurrence, "I was seated in a carriage of the train at Paddington waiting for

it to start, when up rushed our friend here, at the last moment as usual, looking for a place. The train was quite full, and our carriage was all taken with the exception of one seat, which had a bag upon it. Charlie made for the bag, and was proceeding to stow it away in the rack and put himself in its place, when an old gentleman exclaimed, 'Pardon me, sir, but that seat belongs to my friend, and that is his bag which he has placed there to keep it.' Well, Charlie apologised and put back the bag, and then leant in at the door and talked to me till the train started, telling me to let you know that he couldn't be down till the next train. Meantime the owner of the bag never appeared. The whistle sounded, the train moved slowly out of the station; Charlie here, ran along the platform, and just as we got up speed, threw open the door, jumped into the carriage, picked up the bag of the imaginary friend, and, saying to its real owner, 'It's a pity, sir, if your friend is left behind he should not have his bag,' deliberately chucked it out of the window and calmly proceeded to seat himself in its place. The old gentleman turned literally purple with rage, and the rest of the occupants of the carriage, including myself, fairly roared with laughter, while poor Sir James continued to splutter and stammer. At the next station he got out, ignominiously, to telegraph about his property."

"Yes, and the next train will get him in too late for his dinner," broke in Charlie, triumphantly.

Every one laughed, and Florence, turning to the young man by her side, said:

"Is that true, really?"

"True! why, of course it is," replied Summers. "Don't you think I was quite right? Just think of the selfishness of the beast—why, if I hadn't put that bag out of the window I shouldn't have the happiness of sitting next you now. Desperate misfortunes sometimes require desperate measures."

"Oh, that's all very well, Mr. Summers, but I fear I cannot quite flatter myself I had anything to do with the case, for you couldn't have known then that you would take me in to dinner."

"Ah, but all things are possible," he replied; "and when it's a choice between self and bag—well, I sacrifice the latter, especially if the bag belongs to some one else."

"Yes, that's more like it," she laughed. "Most things resolve themselves into a question of self—and of course it was yourself whose comfort was in jeopardy; but I am grateful, nevertheless, at being associated with that much-thought-after individual."

"Well, I am glad of that; it is pleasant to be appreciated," remarked Charlie, with a self-satisfied smile; "especially when one has a hated rival in the case."

"A hated rival?" asked Florence.

"Yes; there's Sinclair, there; never speaking a word to your sister, but looking over here, glaring

at me as though I had committed a crime; *is* it a crime to bask in your smiles, Miss Courtown?"

"How supremely ridiculous you are, Mr. Summers," she answered, blushing; "you certainly do talk a lot of nonsense. Why, I don't suppose that Captain Sinclair even knows you are in the room, and if he did it must be to him a matter of absolute indifference."

"Well, now, shall I tell you something?" exclaimed Charlie; "I shouldn't like to think that, 'pon my honour, and of course I was only chaffing just now, for I consider Cecil Sinclair one of the best fellows in London; he is my great admiration, and has for years been my beau-ideal of what a man should be."

"Do you really think so?" said Florence, now all animation and interest. "I am so glad you like him, because—"

"Yes," smiled Charlie, "I fancy I know all about that 'because.' You see, when a fellow puts a man on a pedestal, as I have Sinclair, then he takes some trouble to observe the likes and dislikes of his image; therefore I cannot help having observed that Sinclair rather affects your society, and that being so, I could not resist the temptation, Miss Courtown, of telling you what I thought of him myself. If a man is popular among men as well as women, it is no small criterion of his good qualities. Forgive me if I have said too much," continued Charlie, "but I'd do just anything for Sinclair, walk through

fire and water for him, I believe, and even—" he concluded, with a return to his own light manner—"sing his praises to a woman in whose good graces I myself was dying to shine."

Florence raised a pair of grateful eyes towards this young man, who had spoken with an earnestness and feeling of which she had not deemed him capable; to her his words sounded like the sweetest music to which she had ever listened; that round boyish face, usually brimming with smiles and fun, now wearing an expression of gravity as though his heart were set upon winning her good opinion, and that good opinion to be won for another, seemed to her a revelation, almost, that people must not be judged by externals alone, and that beneath the most frivolous, the most superficial exterior, might be hid the noblest qualities, requiring nought but opportunity to bring them forth.

"Mr. Summers," she answered in a low tone, "you are a good friend for a man to have, and I think Captain Sinclair is lucky in having such a champion. Will you be my friend, too?" she added, with a slight blush. "For, some day, I may have to welcome all Captain Sinclair's friends in his house, and you may be sure that when that time comes no one will be more welcome than you."

"Really!" exclaimed Charlie. "Oh, I am so glad. You're just cut out for each other—you're both rippers, and you'll be a splendid couple. Let me congratulate you, Miss Courtown, with all my heart."

"Shish," said she, "not so loud. You mustn't tell any one yet awhile; it's a great secret, only you surprised me into telling you by the nice way you spoke of Cecil."

"You don't mind my knowing, do you, Miss Courtown?" said Charlie, with a look of reproach.

"No, of course not; only I don't want every one to hear what we are talking about. Now we must each turn round and do the agreeable to our respective neighbors. You have been awfully rude to Lady Gertrude all this time."

Meanwhile Constance had as usual been amusing herself by teasing the long-suffering Gerald, asking him countless questions, and feigning ignorance on many subjects, just for the fun of seeing how he would answer her. Cricket was the present selection she had made for putting him through his facings.

"Do you like cricket, Mr. Drayton?" she began.

"Yes, very much," he replied, looking at her in open admiration of her appearance, an admiration he was too naïve to conceal.

"Why do you like it?" continued his catechiser. "But before you answer, Mr. Drayton, suppose you cease staring at me as though I were something novel in the wild beast line. Get up a faint show of interest in the contents of your plate, and then answer while you are eating."

"I am very sorry," answered Gerald, contritely. "I did not know I was staring, but I couldn't help

doing it," thus straightway contradicting himself. "I like that frock you have got on to-night most awfully, and altogether you are really quite worth looking at."

"Now that's too good of you," she answered, mockingly. "Of course my frock is a nice one, as it cost a horrid lot of money and I chose it; but if I am only worth looking at on account of my clothes, well, I'll tell my maid to fit them on the wire lady up-stairs that she tries the dresses on, and then, when in future we are talking together, we'll invite the aforesaid wire creature to be present, so that you may gaze as much as you like, and openly admire my garments without in any manner annoying me."

"How cross you are, Miss Constance; a cat may look at a king, so surely I may look at you."

"I don't see why that follows," answered the young lady—"perhaps the king liked it, I don't—but come, you haven't answered my question. Why do you like cricket?" she repeated imperiously.

"Why? Oh! well, because I do," answered Gerald rather lamely, but all the same as though such an argument were conclusive.

"Well, that's an excellent reason," said Constance; "it does credit to your imagination, but Lord James says you weren't in the XI at Eton, so you can't like cricket because you play well."

"Miss Courtown," said Gerald, rather shortly, "I am not conceited, but I hate to be told I can't do

things other men do, especially when it isn't true; no man likes to be made to look small before other people, and, if you remember rightly, once before you taunted me about a game; it was in the Park, and, before a lot of other fellows, you asked me if I was 'afraid' to get a goal; or something equally pleasant for my pride to listen to."

"Really, Mr. Drayton," said Constance, colouring at the recollection of that foolish speech, which he had rather ungenerously recalled, "I don't think it at all nice of you to rake up old sores. I thought I told you afterwards that I was sorry, and that you had behaved beautifully, so beautifully that I was proud of being able to shake hands and make friends; bygones should be bygones."

"Some bygones, perhaps," replied Gerald slowly, while the footman placed sweetbreads before him on a glistening, golden plate, "but only some," he continued, turning to look at his neighbour; "that particular bygone I wouldn't forget for *tout au monde*, Miss Constance, for if it wounds me to remember your somewhat hasty words in the Park, on that morning after the ball, believe me, the pleasantest recollection of my life will ever be that moment when you said 'thank you,' at Hurlingham after the game was over."

"Oh, well, I'm glad you liked it," said Constance, laughing uneasily, but don't let us go into the past now; the present is good enough for me, especially when I am occupied upon a savoury dish—so come,

now, change the subject and tell me some more about to-morrow's match—who are going to play, and heaps of other things I want to know."

"Why, that's the future," commented Gerald, and I thought we were to stick to the present."

"Oh, don't be so precise," exclaimed that changeable young lady, pouting. "Do as I tell you, Mr. Drayton, or I will turn my back upon you for the rest of dinner."

"Please don't threaten anything so awful, Miss Constance; I'll tell you all you want to know—catechise; I'll answer"—and with this Gerald laboriously entered upon a long explanation and obediently replied to all Constance's questions in a manner which proved how well drilled he was in the various phases of that young lady's moods. Thus, alternately sparing and making it up, the two passed through dinner pleasantly enough. There was plenty of conversation on every side. Lord Lynnyear had on his most unbending manner, and was making himself extremely agreeable to his rather disagreeable companion. Sir Timothy occupied himself in relating a long race story to anyone whose eye he was able to catch. I believe he began it to poor Lady Gertrude, who was facing him; but that young lady soon gave up listening, as he meandered on in a preliminary description more prosy than she could bear. So then he turned his attention to Mona, who was seated by his side, and continued his narrative just as though *she* had heard it from the beginning

instead of Lady Gertrude. To Mona this little man, with the high, stiff collar, seemed to be talking Greek. His story, all about "Masterman, who won the Derby in '65, don't you know," was, as may be supposed, perfectly unintelligible to her; but for a time she gave up her undivided attention to the unravelling of the worthy baronet's point, the while she gazed at him with a faint, wondering expression in her great blue eyes, as though trying to understand if this was really serious, or whether she, on her part, were lacking in intelligence in failing to comprehend a subject on which such a foolish-looking person spoke so glibly. In time, too, she turned away. Cecil had caught the look of bored despair upon her face, and, ever thoughtful for others, rescued her from her too verbose neighbour with some little remark which required response. Mona turned on him a glance full of gratitude, and soon felt soothed and happy while listening to that quiet, even voice, which spoke of trifling matters in such a deep and earnest manner.

I will not bore you by detailing the whole of the conversation which took place at that rather lengthy meal. Much that was said may have been deeply interesting to those immediately concerned, but, at the same time, scarcely worthy of being placed on record—destined to a future of print. We can all of us recollect occasions such as these—occasions pleasant enough—now agreeable landmarks in our

recollections of a past, which, enchanted by distance, comes back to us in conversations brimming in points and bristling with repartee, but which, alas, were, in reality, as destitute of the one as they were absolutely devoid of the other. How greatly we should rejoice that phonographs were not arrayed upon the sideboard, gaping to bottle up our words, whether they were spoken at some cosey dinner, where none but congenial companions were present, or on occasions like unto the one which I have just endeavoured to describe, where the modest butler in black gave place to flunkeys gorgeous in powder and plush, while the persons of the diners blazed with jewels and precious stones, whose radiant light was reflected back to their owners from the glittering surface of golden plates. I very much doubt whether any conversation, selected from either occasion, would read well in the more glaring light of day or sound *spirituelle* to the less lenient criticism of that unconivial hour. I will, therefore, only relate that, as the meal progressed, in the same proportion were promoted the feelings of peace and friendliness of the diners one towards another. It must be a bad cook indeed whose efforts are not rewarded by this unacknowledged result. All honour to the lady who showed her knowledge of the chief motor of man's variable humour, in that historical reply to her friend, who, being newly married and inexperienced in the control of mankind, applied to her for advice in the matter of keeping her husband

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in continual good temper. "Feed the brute," was the contemptuous yet truthful reply.

And in that one short sentence a whole lifetime of experience stood forth; an experience little flattering to the lady's own equable-minded spouse, perhaps, but yet very much so to the shrewd penetration of his intelligent helpmate. Far be it from me to endorse this lady's opinion by announcing it as my belief that, in a literal sense, her words are true. Men may be brutes—yea, more, some men are—but yet there are few so absolutely brutish that the goodness of their tempers is entirely dependent upon the excellence of their feeding. But I will maintain that, were more attention paid to the culinary art by the majority of wives, were they able to induce their cooks to take greater interest in the quality of the dishes which they order them to prepare, by themselves showing that they know something of how that order should be carried out; instead of a bored shrugging of the shoulders and an oh-anything-will-do sort of manner, many an unspoken irritation might be spared, and much dining at the club, on the part of the husbands, averted. Man is not exactly a brute, but he is an animal, subject to impressions—impressions good or ill. Now, no one will deny that when a man has been all day hard at work, whether inside of an office, in the pursuit of wealth, or on the outside of a horse in the equally fatiguing pursuit of a fox, he is liable to be in some manner impressed by the dinner which follows after

his daily toil; and, though his wife may herself care little for quantity, on account of her figure, perhaps, and still less for quality, owing to the lateness of lunch and her afternoon tea, yet, should she deem it her duty to see that the impression made by that dinner shall be rather good than ill. Every little helps, as the old woman said when she emptied her wash-tub into the sea; and every good impression, however small, from whatever cause it may spring, severally contributes towards the sum total of domestic happiness.

People are apt to underrate the influence of trifles. Life is made up of trifles; and even trifles are capable of being good or bad. There is a right and a wrong way of doing everything; and, though to my mind, my future wife may not be wholly right if she look upon my dinner as a trifle, yet neither will she be altogether wrong should she regard me as a brute.

CHAPTER X.


JOIN THE LADIES.

AFTER the ladies had left the table the men settled to their wine, or rather the modern equivalent, their cigarettes. Whether a cigarette in the dining-room be a commendable custom or the reverse, it is very certain that it has the combined effect of sparing the cellars of a host and materially shortening the stay of the men after the departure of the ladies. Think of this, ye wives who are so "down" upon the prevailing habit, which sends men into the drawing-room "reeking with tobacco smoke."

Of course I have never been in the company of the ladies when they retire to the drawing-room after dinner, before being followed by the men, and am, therefore, unable to speak with any certainty upon a subject of which I know nothing that is definite; but I cannot help the possession of a pretty shrewd suspicion that, during that period of isolation, the ladies are not unfrequently bored, so bored indeed that they do not always take much trouble to conceal the fact or make exertion to render themselves particularly agreeable one towards the other. If some men are brutes, who require feeding with food in order that they may become amiable, though it may

not sound *galant* to say so, some women resemble their husbands in so far that they also have to be fed, though the feeding be admiration and attention—less material food, it is true, but yet sometimes as difficult to procure in the best quality as the other; and when the men remain behind “smoking and drinking,” there is a falling off in the converse of that bevy of beauty, now alone in their glory, which temporary depression, could those bibulous people in the other room but observe, would be to them the most gratifying evidences of their own popularity they could by any possibility possess. Few flowers care to blush unseen, and latter-day loveliness seldom cares to waste its beauty upon the desert air, and “a parcel of chattering women” is sometimes less preferable than a desert. Be it understood that these sentiments are not my own, for, in writing thus, I but quote a conversation once overheard, and which ever since I have longed to retail. Glad am I that to put on record my own feelings on this subject would be entirely out of place, for it is certain that I should forever forswear my cigarette and vote in favour of being allowed, French fashion, to continue to bask in beauty’s smiles without the intermission of one single begrudged moment.

On the present occasion I think there was only one among all those charming women in the drawing-room who exerted herself to please, and that one was Mona. Mona was eminently a woman’s



woman, if one may be permitted such an expression; to her the companionship of the sterner sex was of no more necessity than would have been the presence of a polar bear. She enjoyed talking to men, of course—some men—but women were to her companions equally desirable, and she did not disdain to do her utmost to please or render herself agreeable to those of her own sex, as a great many women are in the habit of doing.

At this moment she was unconsciously doing what she could to promote the harmony of the company and add her mite to the general enjoyment. She had been chatting gaily with Lady Gertrude, but now seeing poor Lady Lynnyear struggling in the clutches of that cross Lady Tarragon, while looking as bored as any hostess can permit herself to appear, or rather, as a person of Lady Lynnyear's tact would dream of showing, she crossed over to where they sat, and, with that sacrifice of self which was peculiar to her, proceeded to rescue Lady Lynnyear from the position, and by a well-executed flank movement about a piece of work, engaged the enemy, in the shape of Lady Tarragon, till their conversation became so absorbing that the hostess was enabled to escape with the pleasing consciousness that she had done her duty; and if that dear girl enjoyed a talk about embroideries with Lady Tarragon, she assuredly would not be the person to balk her.

Meanwhile Florence was busy sorting out some music, so as to be prepared, should she be asked to

play. She played well, and knew it. There was no nonsense about Florence. One of the reasons of Cecil's adoration for her was this quality she possessed, namely, a sort of general downright candour. There was nothing false about her; no humbug of any kind. If asked to play, she played. *Il ne faut pas se faire presser* was to her a fact, not a saying; and when other girls with half her power of pleasing, through the medium of the piano, refused and refused before finally permitting themselves to be persuaded to monopolise the general attention, Florence would delight in astonishing these young persons by acceding to the first request, and, stepping straight up to the piano, do what was required of her.

"Nothing like getting a thing over," she would say. "If it is to be a bad performance, the least said the soonest mended; and the less attention one attracts to oneself by waiting to be pressed, the better for one's reputation, more chance of false notes escaping unobserved, and the piece may be over before the majority of people have become aware of its commencement. On the other hand, if the performance is a good one and the music well played, then, since people want to hear good music, the sooner they get it the more polite it is on your part to accede to their request."

"There is no jolly nonsense about you, Miss Courtown," once said Charlie Summers, "you just say what you mean and mean what you say; so that a

fellow always knows where he is when he is talking to you." And this was perfectly true; to use Charlie's somewhat emphatic expression, there *was* no jolly nonsense about Florence.

CHAPTER XI.

MUSIC.

It was not long before the men came in from the dining-hall, bringing with them an aroma of cigarettes, which caused Lady Tarragon to sniff angrily in the direction of her husband, but that reckless nobleman walked on, feigning an innocence he was perhaps far from feeling. "Sufficient for the day," was his lordship's motto: a lecture on the deterioration of modern manners, and the dissipation of men in general, was no doubt inevitable when the time came for bed, but till then he was free, and it was not likely he would be guilty of such a *bêtise* as self-sacrifice by inviting those unpleasant remarks at this moment, while the recollection of his sins, or rather, the odour of tobacco, was fresh upon him. Therefore he employed his freedom, by marching towards his charming hostess, and, entering into conversation with her, was soon oblivious of everything except the fascination of that bell-like voice whose tones he so much admired. But this immunity from stern reality was not to last, for Lady Lynnyear, knowing what was expected of her, soon began to talk of music, to which she had been looking forward, as the Courtown girls were accomplished in this respect; but as pleasure

is popularly assigned the second place, it was first her duty to ask Lady Tarragon to play something for them on the piano. "Well," said that lady, visibly brightening, "I will, with pleasure, dear Lady Lynn-year; but it is so long since I have practiced, may I ask you to ring the bell, Captain Sinclair. Thank you," to that gentleman, who rose obedient to her request. "I must get my maid to unpack my music." Thus it was not until after an infinitude of trouble that her ladyship was enabled to take her place at the piano: the powdered footman had to be told to find the maid, the maid had to find the music, and when found the footman had to bring it down to the drawing-room.

"Dear me," exclaimed Lady Tarragon, "if that stupid woman hasn't sent the wrong pieces! How provoking! You must tell Downes to look again;" and the footman departed to carry out the whole routine again from the beginning.

At last the right piece came, and at that moment, if I may be pardoned so vile a pun, the peace of the company left; for her ladyship sailed to the piano, capturing Captain Sinclair *en route*, with a request that he would come and assist her, thus breaking up one little tête-à-tête. Next thing Lady Tarragon required was to be arranged, and though Cecil, in his earnest way, set about lighting the candles, as though it were her ladyship's life instead of her complexion which depended upon the amount of illumination, nothing would do until at least two other

men had been summoned to open the music, screw up the stool, and make the various preparations required, ostensibly for the comfort of the musician, but more probably for the sake of advertising the fact that that particular musician was about to perform. And the performance!—well, why harrow my readers as Lady Tarragon harrowed her audience ! We have all been through it. Personally I am so accustomed to this kind of thing that I am better able to bear it than others. When a person makes unusual fuss and disturbance about doing his, or her, best upon the piano for the amusement of the company, then I either screw up my ears to the sticking-point and listen, or bury myself in a corner of the room with the most agreeable companion I can secure, the world forgetting and by the world forgot. But this is not so easy; for a woman like Lady Tarragon has eyes everywhere, and any one caught talking, or even looking inattentive and bored, is certain to be placed upon that lady's black books and be with difficulty forgiven, a state of things far from desirable, for the Lady Tarragons of this world frequently give entertainments at which one may wish to appear. The company in general sat up to listen to the music which the titled musician thumped forth for their edification. One couple, indeed, were hidden in a corner far from the madding sound. Constance sat upon a sofa in the most remote part of the room, and by her side was Lord James, who, having possessed himself of a good-sized Japanese

parasol, which usually hung upon one of the screens for ornament, held it in front of himself under the plea that he could not stand the light, but in reality more with a view to escape being seen than with any idea of concealing the light from himself.

"How can my mother ask such an old guy as that to play?" said his lordship, irreverently. "But you will play presently, won't you, Miss Constance?"

"Why, I should probably play far worse than poor Lady Tarragon," answered she. "I can't play a bit; I am not accomplished, like my sisters. They play and sing to perfection."

"Oh, you are accomplished, you know you are, in other things," said Jim, with a look full of meaning. "In fact, you have accomplished a great deal, Miss Constance; for I assure you you have accomplished my destruction."

"Your destruction, Lord James! You don't look much destroyed."

"Oh, but I am; I am destroyed with admiration for you. I never saw anyone like you in all my life."

"Well, you are getting on, Lord James," said Constance, laughing. "Practice makes perfect, you know; and if you are destroyed with admiration at the early age of nineteen, why, by the time you are one and twenty you will be a perfect Don Juan. But talking of destruction, Lady Tarragon's music is bringing about *my* destruction. Oh, if she would only leave off!"

As though in echo to that distant wish, the music

did suddenly leave off, and Lady Tarragon rose to resume her seat, smiling benignly upon those who thanked her with such deep expressions of gratitude.

"Now, Miss Courtown, you must play," said Lady Lynnyear, turning to Florence. "Let's have something lively," she added, unconsciously betraying how she too had suffered from the late infliction.

"Very well, Lady Lynnyear," replied Florence, immediately moving towards the piano, where Sinclair was still standing, as though waiting for her all this long time.

Giving him one grateful, loving look, as he settled the stool for her and arranged the candle shades to better suit her sight, Florence ran her fingers over the keys and immediately began. Could this be the same piano that had wailed beneath the Tarragon thumps—can these be the same notes! As if by magic, people ceased to speak, and all listened, as those talented fingers drew forth music such as had not been often heard within those ancient walls.

Florence played beautifully, and as she went on, and on, seemed herself to forget her surroundings and all those who listened to her there. Cecil stood bending over her, a proud light in his earnest eyes, a light called forth by the knowledge that this charming being, this girl who was now holding all around her bound as though with a spell, was his, his own, his very own; but this afternoon she had said to him that word, that yes, which gave her to him for ever; and Florence, too, played on, conscious only of that

gaze which watched her with a look so full of love. How trustful, how happy she felt, how safe it seemed now that her life was to be in the keeping of that noble nature, that manly man. No wonder, feeling thus, the music came straight from her heart; and that night Florence played as even her sisters had never heard her play before. When she had finished she rose and went back to her seat, scarcely seeming to notice the thanks which came to her from every side. Cecil had whispered, "thank you, darling" as he shut up the music for her; what other gratitude did she require after that! When he had followed her to her seat she turned to him and said, "I think, Cecil, you ought to speak to mamma about what we have agreed upon; will you do it to-night, and let me hear what she says before we go to bed?"

"Must I," sighed Cecil, "well, very well, dear," and as was his wont when a duty had to be done, to do it without delay, he rose and crossed over to where Mrs. Courtown was sitting, and paved the way for the communication he had been told to make. Meanwhile Mona had been requested to sing, and, asking Constance to accompany her, she in her turn took her seat at the piano. A murmur of expectation went round, for Mona's singing, was far-famed, and all loved to hear that beautiful voice. They used to form a pretty picture, these two girls, at the piano; Constance, for once, a grave, rather sad look upon her face, playing as though with all her heart, her very body gently swaying to the time of the notes

which her fingers called forth; Mona, standing by her side, upright as a dart, her golden hair glistening crimson in the subdued light of candles shaded with that rich soft hue, her sweet mouth open to permit the egress of that glorious voice, while her eyes, those great questioning eyes, were fixed with a look of far-away that seemed to speak of sights beyond that tapestried wall and visions that others could not see. A picture of more unstudied beauty or unconscious grace would be hard to find; months of striving after effect would never have produced the impression which Mona's perfect loveliness and voice divine, when joined with such natural ease and entire absence of thought for herself, were able to achieve. And as she sang, a silence came over those gay people in that room and made them one and all feel that a something had entered into their lives, a something of which they had not hitherto been aware.

As that glorious voice rose high around them the careless chatter ceased, the worldly babble of daily life dropped, crushed, as it were, by the pure, perfect sounds, which created an air so sweet that in it all the false must die. And die they did, those idle words on idle lips; a pause had come, brief, 'tis true, but yet a pause, which compelled every person present to listen, and feel, though for one moment only, a sensation beyond their power to define, a longing for something better, a feeling no words can here describe:

"A feeling of sadness and longing that is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only as the mist resembles the rain."

I wonder if any of my readers can follow me in this lame description of the effect the singing of this beautiful girl had upon her hearers. Have any of you experienced "a feeling of sadness and longing?" Whence it comes or where it goes, ye know not, even as I myself could never say. Alone, amongst the wonders of nature you may feel it; at sea you may feel it, as, leaning against the side of some swift travelling vessel, you gaze around at the troubled waves through which her course is sped. In church this feeling may come o'er you; by the bedside of some dying friend, whose end is peace, while your tears for his loss are mingled with joy for his release, and resemble sorrow only as the mist resembles the rain. And though it may seem exaggeration to say so, Mona, with her angelic face and heavenly voice, awoke a similar feeling in the hearts of all around, and for one moment only, but still, for one precious moment, stemmed that worldly torrent whose tide for ever runneth on. To have the power of arresting that even flow for a space, however brief, is proof one has not lived in vain. As to the truth of what I have said, let us gaze around us and watch Lady Tarragon. Stern and stiff, a woman, to all intents and purposes, devoid of sentiment, a stranger to emotion, upright in her chair, as though to catch each note as it rises or falls, she listens; her breast heaving, her heart swelling with recollection of feelings almost dead, now almost

reawakened. Look at Lord Ringwood, scoffer, sceptic, blasé, spoilt. He rises, and, walking over to the piano, leans upon it, his eyes fixed upon the unconscious face of her who has stirred his soul as he could never have believed. Mona sings on:

“ The flowers will blossom anew in the spring,
The trees find fresh foliage green;
But what is the echo cold winter will bring—
The echo that summer ‘has been.’ ”

Lord Ringwood gazes at her in rapt interest. Can it be that he, survivor of love affairs without number, can be fool enough to be so moved by a pair of childish eyes and a voice which sings a sentimental song? Ah, but then, what eyes and what a voice!

“ Oh, if that girl would marry me I might be a better man,” was the unuttered sentiment of that worldly heart.

But no one can rob us of thinking once more,
Though a past all our harvest should glean;
And we’ll look upon now what has long gone before,
Those times we describe as “have been.”

And though a great distance dividing us twain,
While gulfs of long years roll between,
We will not bemoan, love, nor even complain,
But cherish, love, times that “have been.”

The music ceased, and no one ventured to break in on the silence that followed; and then again running

her fingers over the keys, as though divining what her sister would choose to sing, Constance played the accompaniment to these words, which Mona sang in a manner that, simple as the words were, yet held the audience as though they could listen for ever.

What power a moment may contain,
To mar, create, destroy ;
What store of sunshine, store of rain,
What store of grief or joy !

One moment hope is in the air,
While life is given birth ;
That moment p'rhaps may see despair
For others now on earth.

One moment here a heart may break,
And there a heart be glad—
Here one the path of virtue take,
Another choose the bad.

One moment here the sun is bright
Upon our fatherland;
That moment all is still'd in night
Upon Australia's strand.

Thus night and morning are but one ;
Each moment both contains ;
And though the roll of years may run,
One moment still remains.

"What a funny little song," said Gerald; "but you waste your voice on such trifles; give us something more substantial, Miss Mona, if you will—"

"No, don't sing any more, Mona," said Lady Lynnyear, kindly, you surely must be tired."

"No, I am not," she replied, in a matter-of-fact voice, which contrasted strangely with the tones so lately heard. "I like singing, if it pleases people. What shall it be, Lord Ringwood?" turning toward that individual, who was still gazing at her in a dreamy sort of way.

"Well, don't laugh at me, Miss Courtown; but really your singing has such an effect upon me, that I want you to keep it up, and sing something horribly sentimental."

"Horribly sentimental," replied Mona, laughing. "Well, really, Lord Ringwood, that is an odd request, from you;" but Constance, with a smile, immediately began an accompaniment, and, without further ado, her sister sang the following:

Alone, all alone, in a far distant city,
The world all forgetting, and by world forgot,
Bestow on me, dearest, one glance full of pity,
For can you not picture how hard is my lot?

Alone in a desert, is thing that is lonely,
With sand all around one, and sky up above;
Worse far is a crowd, where you yourself only
Have no one to care for, and no one to love.

Affection thus wasted can nought do but perish;
All fountains of feeling from long disuse dry;
So Providence sent me a some one to cherish,
Lest that which was good in my nature should die.

The lane is a long one which has not a turning,
When life's at its worst, then misfortune will mend;
Those months of sad exile, of grief and heart-burning,
Are ended by heaven providing a friend.

Together, alone, in a far distant city,
The world all forgetting, and by world forgot;
Though no one is nigh us, we need not their pity,
For we are together, and joined is our lot.

"I thought they would just suit Lord Ringwood, as he asked for something in that line. Were they sentimental enough," she asked, turning towards him.

"By Jove, yes," he replied; "really, Miss Courtown, the expression you put into your words makes a fellow feel all-overish. I declare, I almost feel inclined to sit down and write poetry myself."

"Pray don't!" cried Constance laughing, "we should be expected to read it; but still, Mona, it certainly is a triumph, if it makes a man like Lord Ringwood desire to write poetry."

"Yes, he is very flattering," replied her sister, smiling; "but I am glad, if you really liked it," she added.

“Like it, Miss Courtown, is a weak expression. I shall never forget this evening, I assure you,” aiding his words with a look which, I fear, was lost upon that most unsusceptible of young ladies.

“Cheer up, Sam, and never let your spirits go down,” struck up Constance on the piano, intercepting the glance, which was intended for her sister. “Come, Lord Ringwood, we have been sentimental enough for one evening. I declare, your grave face quite depresses me.”

The others had moved away from the piano now, and there was only a short interval of conversation before going to bed. Florence was listening to the tale of how Cecil had fared with her mother—badly he told her; she had at once placed her veto upon any kind of engagement, saying that nothing must be said upon the subject until she had communicated with her husband; that he would object, she was almost certain.

The rest of the party were gathered around Lady Lynnyear, engaged in a general conversation, pending the arrival of the butler with the candlesticks.

“Is it true,” Mona was asking, “that anyone can come here and see the grounds or the house, and that poor people may picnic in the park and even wander about the house?”

“Yes,” answered Lady Lynnyear, “we let people go anywhere and it answers very well. Very little damage is done. There are of course regular men in charge of the parties who wish to see the gar-

dens or the rooms. There is a view from the top of the house which, they say, is one of the finest in the county, and it would be hard if people were not allowed to see it."

"Well, I call it extremely good-natured of you," said Mrs. Courtown. "Do you mean to say that strangers go over the house, while you are in it?"

"Frequently," replied Lady Lynnyear with a smile; "I often encounter little parties in the corridors, being shown round, and sometimes even they peep into the room in which I sit."

"Oh, yes," chimed in Lord James, "my mother is perfectly devoted to the people. I have sometimes seen her get up and ask them into the drawing-room, saying, 'Oh, do come in and look about you as much as you wish,' and the poor things just poke their heads in at the door, and then fly out as though they were shot."

"Nonsense, Jim, how you do exaggerate," said his mother.

"Not at all," answered the boy; "why, the other morning when we were on the lake in the boat, a party hailed us from the shore, and shouted 'Hi! can we have that boat?' My mother was just going to answer, when she would have probably said 'yes, get in, good people, and my son will row you about,' but I stopped her just in time, and begged our uninvited visitors to be kind enough to wait until we had finished with it."

"Well," smiled Lady Lynnyear, "we might just

as well have given it up, Jim; we can go in it any day ourselves."

"There, she owns to it," cried her son, triumphantly.

"Well," exclaimed Lady Tarragon, who had been listening in undisguised astonishment, "I wonder you don't have everything stolen, besides having all your throats cut at night by concealed burglars. Why, at Tarragon Park, no one is allowed to view the house except once a week, and then only on obtaining special permission from his lordship."

"Apropos of this conversation," continued the hostess, "a very sad thing happened the day before yesterday only. A poor woman from one of the neighbouring villages came to inform us that she, with her family and some friends, picnicked in the park and were then shown over the castle, and when they returned to their *rendez-vous* at the top of Lynn Hill they missed their little boy, eight years old. Supposing he had wandered away, they searched for him everywhere in vain. Then they gave an alarm at the castle, and all the servants and keepers turned out; a regular hunt for him was organized, but to no purpose—even the lake was dragged, but to the mother's great relief and also ours, the poor little fellow's body was not found—no trace of him could be discovered anywhere; and all they can do now is to hope that he may have been picked up somewhere in the neighbourhood of Lynn, which is a town on the other side of the hill, and, it is possible, taken to some cottage, where he is safe and

well at this moment. The police have been told of the disappearance, and all the towns advertised of the fact; but county police are not very shrewd, and it is quite possible the child may be somewhere in the neighbourhood under their very noses."

"How very sad," said Mona; and all the others echoed this sentiment, expressing pity for the poor mother.

"But after all, it may not be serious," added Lady Lynnyear. "So many things of the same kind have happened here. At these picnics it is no uncommon thing for people to wander away and get lost; and life travels so slowly and so evenly in these old country villages—most of them miles from any railway—that sometimes as much as four or five days have elapsed before they return to their sorrowing friends. The poorer classes don't lay so much importance on these things as we do, which often accounts for their apparent want of affection for one another. They have an idea that things will all turn out right for them in the end; and I must say they very often do."

Here the butler approached to announce the arrival of the candlesticks, which were being placed upon a table by two footmen.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SMOKING-ROOM.

A GENERAL good-night ensued, and everyone retired to their rooms—the ladies to talk over the events of the day while engaged upon the brushing of their hair, and the men to don gorgeous suits of clothes in which to appear in the privacy of the smoking-room; and some of them were gorgeous in very truth. Charlie Summers was dazzling enough, but Sir Timothy reappeared arrayed in crimson and gold, and when settled in his chair, a cigar as long as himself in his mouth, he looked a sight to make men marvel. Ringwood alone still wore his dress coat, with his usual laziness having apparently considered it too much trouble to go and change. The younger members of the party each came into the room with a slightly shy and shamefaced air, as though not quite at home in their finery, and almost anticipating the raillery which an appearance so unusual might call forth. They seemed to forget that they were all in the same boat, and that where they looked ridiculous or splendid perhaps, their companions did exactly the same. But though the custom of wearing coats of many colours has certainly gained considerable ground of late, yet it often strikes me as

not only startling, but, what is more, oftentimes unbecoming; for a man who may look extremely well in conventional evening dress, is frequently transformed, by means of the garments in which he smokes, into an individual who gives one the idea of *gaucherie* and want of ease, this being most likely due to a presence of self-consciousness; for it requires a great deal of innate "swagger" to carry off the novelty of an unaccustomed dress. To look as if aware of the quality of that dress is fatal to the whole appearance of a man. Thus on this occasion, though Cecil Sinclair and Gerald Drayton seemed much at home in their respective suits of purple silk and dark green flannel, poor Sir Timothy appeared conscious of every one of the large golden balls which so liberally speckled his crimson coat; and even Charlie Summers entered the room as though convinced that his unusual appearance might be provocative of chaff; but as it happened, barring a few remarks, the only person whose costume excited comment was that of our languid friend, Lord Ringwood, who, as I said above, was not arrayed like one of these.

"Holloa! Ringwood," shouted Bill Lomax, "don't you run to anything gaudy in the way of clothes! We can't allow that, you know, my boy."

"Can't allow what?" asked his lordship, slowly lighting his pipe.

"Why, that coat! this is evidently a fancy dress meeting, and you mustn't spoil it by appearing in anything but costume."

"Really, my dear fellow, I fail to see the necessity," answered Ringwood. "There are enough splendours here to-night, without my adding to their number; and, you see, I thought I'd act as a foil for the rest of you."

"Now, come, that won't do," continued Lomax, appealing to the company generally, "we can't have you coming in here looking like a Methody parson out for a holiday, can we? Now, I'll vote the court forgive the prisoner to-night; but should he sin again to-morrow, he will have to take the consequences, and something might happen to that pretty black coat he wears."

"What's that, dear boy?" asked Ringwood, as he crossed his legs and took his pipe from his mouth to examine it fondly and critically, as I have seen pipe-smokers do.

"Well, I'll tear it up, old chap, so that you will have to retire and put on that coat of many colours I know you have in lavender up-stairs." And saying this, Mr. Lomax gave vent to a loud, unamused laugh, as though to lead the way to merriment over his own attempt at wit. Everyone smiled, and some even joined in the laugh, but more than one glance was cast towards Ringwood, to see how he would take such a silly threat. As was to be expected, however, he took it perfectly unmoved, and, smiling at Lomax, replied once more:

"All right, dear boy;" and continued calmly smoking, as before.

While this little by-play was taking place, the others, by this time oblivious of their clothes, were talking on subjects which interested them more nearly than what they should wear. Cricket, of course, predominated, and a group, of which Jimmy was one, was deep in conversation upon that popular game, while Carruthers sat poring over an old score-book, reading the records of bygone matches with an expression of interest upon his face which denoted the absorbing nature of his studies. To a cricket-loving crowd, over their pipes, nothing is so absorbing as cricket—except, perhaps, the brandies and sodas by their side. I have heard cricket talked for hours; how it is done I cannot say, or how the conversation progresses without frequent repetition, I am unable to explain; but it certainly must be agreeable conversation, to judge of the manner in which it engrosses the attention of all those who take part in these discussions. I remember, once, staying in a country-house for a cricket match. All the guests, almost, were famous cricketers. We played cricket all day, which was delightful; for, within limits, I myself am devoted to that perfect game. But in the evening, after dinner, when gathered together to smoke our pipes, arrayed in all the glory of pretty clothes, we fought our battles o'er again, and not only *our* battles, but those of other people. But I should not have said we, for, personally, I was altogether out of this contest, as the reminiscences were so distant, and the

details so nice, that absolute want of knowledge prevented my joining in the general conversation. I knew nothing of "how Scott bowled a no ball in '81, just at the most critical period of the game;" and I had, I confessed to myself, positively never heard of "that fellow, Stoddard—a left-handed chap, who made us leather-hunt for the best part of two days;" "and, oh, do you remember that sixer over the trees, cried one?" and may he be forgiven, for he answered "Yes." A sixer years ago! Well, this sort of thing went on for two whole nights, and I—a person entirely unaccustomed to hold his tongue—had as yet scarcely uttered a word. This was a state of things so wrong that it could not be allowed to continue; so, seeking out a solitary one among the party, who, like myself, only worshipped cricket in such moderation as, though it enabled us to take part in the game by day, utterly precluded us from taking part in its repetition by night, I proposed to him a plan whereby we might ourselves attract some attention in those, to us, most irksome hours for smoking.

The plan was that we should "invent"—what sacrilege!—reminiscences, and that evening, while dressing for dinner—his room adjoined mine—we had a rehearsal. He spoke of imaginary "Scotts," and I "recollected" equally chimeric "sixer." Years had elapsed since the occurrence of those "sixer." The cues were written down and each knew when to answer or lead up to the other. When the time for action came I was nearly taken

with stage-fright, and obliged to keep my usual silence; but *amour propre* came to the rescue, and, taking up my parable—and it was a parable—I began. My friend continued, and presently we had the enormous satisfaction of feeling that we had scored. Men gathered around us, questioning and cross-questioning, showing an interest in our manufactured experiences, which even then utterly puzzled me to account for; but an enthusiastic cricketer will speak of any details of his beloved game with an earnestness and attention that will, to me, ever remain a marvel. But what a success we had! My partner and I got the ear of the house, and for that evening were able to talk to our very hearts' content, and, when the curtain went down, or rather when we ourselves were drawing our curtains, while turning into bed, we were able to congratulate each other upon the absolute success of our little plot. And thus Jim was holding forth about cricket; true, he could not talk of "sixers" of ten years ago, unless it were of those which went to make up the years of his tender age; but he could speak of a later experience, and mention the items of less antique score-books. Everyone listened, eager to get in their own oar, in the shape of something as remarkably surprising as the anecdote of the person now in possession of the floor. "How Jones got run out by that fool, Smith, and so lost us the match." "How Tibbs took off the fast bowler, just because he wanted to bowl himself." "How James, who is

thought a good player, can do nothing but 'slog' 'pulling' in the most barefaced manner." All these and many more similar to them were the little cullings from history, which held spellbound the people who listened to them; even Cecil was bending forward and speaking with an eagerness far beyond his habitude.

And this then is the conversation that the wives and sisters so often long to overhear, the conversations where naughty stories abound and little *double entendres* float airily about amongst the circling puffs of smoke. Oh, mesdames, how disappointed you would be could the reality but reach your ears, for though it is cricket now, in autumn it is partridge, and in winter it is horse; there is no variation, nothing to temper the monotony of an ordinary conversation in an ordinary smoking-room. Have you ever heard hunting men talk hunting? how they record their deeds of "dering do," how elastic is their yarn, as after each successive brandy and soda ditches get broader, fences mount higher, and the run grows longer, till the poor person who is still awaiting his turn to narrate, feels that he indeed must make it appear as though he were Munchausen himself, does he wish to eclipse the performance of his predecessor. The same it is with shooting and all other branches of sport; ye little fishes, have I not listened to all of them, and are not these words wrung from the depths of a long and bitter experience! Far more amusing, perhaps, is the conversation of the

boudoir than that of the smoking-room; and I would much like to wager that, at the moment of which I am writing, the ladies up-stairs are more entertaining than those men now engaged upon the business of smoking, below; for it is while being "brushed" that sparks of wit will crackle and merry repartee go circling round. Whom do you really think is the "best company," the Miss Courtowns and Lady Gertrudes, or the Bill Lomaxes and Sir Timothies of this world? Can one expect bread from stones, and can we therefore look to hear of brilliant speech, "a feast of reason and flow of soul" from addlepated butterflies such as these? Why, Constance Courtown could silence hundreds of Sir Timothies almost as soon as these exquisite gentlemen chose to open their lips.

Sir Timothy, our Sir Timothy, was not much of a cricketer, but as regards racing he somewhat resembled that doctor who, not understanding the disease of his patient, administered a medicine that would give him fits, because "he was death on fits," and would be able to treat him for those. Thus Sir Timothy, being "death on racing," ignored the conversation around him, and, turning it into those channels whose chart he better knew, was now detailing to Gerald one of his stock stories with no little genuine feeling, for racing was to him as cricket was to Lord James, a subject which more nearly persuaded him to eloquence than anything else on earth.

"Yes, at Newmarket," he was saying, "I stood

Arab to win me an enormous stake; the Moon was a hot favorite, and everyone was lumping it on that horse to 'get home.' People told me that now was my chance; back the Moon, and I should get out of the hole, for we were all pretty well in the cart, as outsiders had won every race. Well, I thought it out pretty clearly, and it was tolerably apparent that I must have an awful plunge if I wished to 'get home' by laying odds on the favorite, so I tried to find out what chance the Arab had; the stable had backed him, and as they were a knowing lot, this was good enough for me, so I determined to have a bit on. I got sixes, I remember—six to one is rather better to pull off than two to one on. A man passing me said, 'I believe some fools are actually backing Arab; I think any one who could be so anserous ought to be shot, don't you? it's the old story of a fool and his money.' Well, I could only give a sickly smile, for you see in this instance I was the fool. I would not have owned it for the world; and I registered a vow that if the Arab were beaten I would pretend that I had backed the favorite. When the roar of voices announced that they were off, I was more nearly excited than I had ever been in my life; I was leaning against the railings in front of the jockey club enclosure, and in my endeavours to stand upon tip-toe and see more, I nearly impaled my chin upon the spikes. On they came; the Arab and the Moon were leading almost neck and neck, the latter was slightly ahead; in this order they raced past me,

and, regardless of spikes, I leant forward in the general excitement, and saw the favorite make one little peck just as he was nearing the post; this peck enabled the Arab to get on terms with him, and locked together the two darted past the judges' box. Which had won? 'A dead heat,' roared the crowd. Oh, that it might be a dead heat, I thought; for no idea of the Arab's having won outright ever entered my head; then the number went up, number 13—I remember it to this day—the Arab's number. The Arab had won, by Jove! only then I began to realise what a devil of a stake I had to rake in; it was the greatest coup I ever made, and for one moment I remained, my chin resting upon those sharp-pointed spikes, lost in thankful meditation. You can imagine how the very people who would have been the first to call me a fool before, were now the first to declare that I had been "deuced clever," don't yer know; and it was rather rough on them that, as I had been 'in the know,' I didn't think of giving them a hint, "old chappie;" as if I could have hinted that the Moon would make a peck on the post. Such d——d nonsense don't yer know," concluded the baronet with a chuckle.

Gerald had listened to this story with interest, for he was fond of racing, and the "shop" of that pastime was to him a congenial subject.

"When I was in India," began Lord Ringwood, when there came a pause.

"Oh, come, none of that," shouted a chorus; "we've heard all about that."

But the speaker calmly waited till this interruption had ceased and then began again.

"When I was in India I saw a thing that none of you fellows could do."

"Well, what's that," asked some one.

"Well, I saw a lady of colour stick two needles in the ground."

"What sized needles—darning needles or Cleopatra needles?" put in Lomax.

"Neither," Ringwood went on; "but needles, as ordinary people interpret the word; and then she turned over backwards and proceeded to pick them up with her eyelids."

"Oh, I say, that won't do; that's ridiculous, don't you know?" commented Sir Timothy.

"Great Scott, what a yarn!" said Lomax.

"Well, she did it, 'pon my honour," nodded the author of the anecdote.

"Well," said Jim, "I once saw a fellow chuck a ball of string into the air, and it went a devil of a height. Then the chap caught hold of the lower end, which had got unwound, and he went swarming up it like a monkey, hand over hand, till he got to the top, and then he sat on the ball."

"Very good, Jimmy, very good," said Gerald; "that story bears the stamp of truth."

"Well," exclaimed Charlie Summers, "it was once in Canada that I was present at a fire. The cold

was enough to freeze the nose off a chap's face. A shout arose that there was a woman left in the burning building, and then we saw her on the topmost balcony, yelling like old boots. How the devil was she to be got down, no one knew, as the ladders were too short for the distance. Well, you may smile, but this is what happened: The firemen turned the hose in the direction of the lady, and, as the water went hissing through the air, it froze into a solid mass, and the next moment the rescued woman came sliding down this impromptu icicle, just as though she had been accustomed to go skating in her night-dress every evening of her life. That's a true story for you, at any-rate," concluded Charlie, gravely.

"Oh, perfectly true," laughed everybody; "and what was the lady's name, Charlie?"

"Oh, I never mention names," replied he; "it's not fair."

At this moment a tapping was heard at the door, and a voice exclaimed,

"Lord Tarragon; is Lord Tarragon there?"

"Yes. Well, what is it? who is it?" replied that gentleman peevishly, called back from his fools' paradise of freedom, to the stern reality of matrimonial thralldom.

"Her ladyship, her ladyship," was all the maid, for she it was, was able to ejaculate.

"Well, come in, woman; what about her ladyship?" queried Tarragon.

But the poor woman was evidently too frightened and upset to explain herself to all that staring crowd of men, and Cecil, going forward, said gently, "What is the matter, is Lady Tarragon ill, what is it you want ?" That soft voice and those kind eyes worked like magic in calming the hysterical woman.

And she answered, "Lady Tarragon's had a fright, sir; there are noises behind her bed, and she wants his lordship at once, yes, mi'lord, mi'lady's taking on awful, mi'lord.

"Noises, what sort of noises ?" asked that bewildered man.

"Rats !" ejaculated Jimmy; "there are plenty of them about."

"No, mi'lord, not rats, it's groanings; oh, it's awful, and her ladyship is frightened real bad; please come at once—"

"Come along, Tarragon, we had better go with you in case there is anything we can do; you go first and find out all about it," said Cecil. And Lord Tarragon left the room after the now half reassured maid, the rest of the party following at a little distance.

CHAPTER XIII.

LADY TARRAGON'S ALARM.

IN the corridor, at the top of the stairs, stood a figure, waiting; what it was or who it was, by the uncertain light they were unable to discern, but they were not long to remain in ignorance, for whoever it was soon burst into a figure of speech, "Oh, be quick, you heartless man, here am I frightened to death and you go on smoking and drinking, and don't care one scrap what happens to me; oh, what an unfeeling monster you are, Tarragon," continued the voice. "I never was more miserable in all my life." And indeed, no one who saw Lady Tarragon, who it was, at that moment would have felt inclined to disbelieve her. Her sparse hair in tight little plaits all over her head, sticking up like perpendicular pig-tails, her false front gone, her face devoid of powder and innocent of rouge, her upper teeth removed for their nightly sojourn in the tooth tumbler on the wash-stand, clad only in her *robe de nuit*, with a pair of skinny legs just visible beneath, Lady Tarragon certainly looked an object of pity, though to her well-trained spouse this appearance probably was the one he most of all dreaded, as too forcibly reminding him of many a weary lecture given when other more fortu-

nate people were enjoying a well-earned repose. It was not easy for the young men at the foot of the stairs to repress a smile.

"Poor devil, Tarragon, how I pity him," muttered Ringwood.

"I say, if we only had a hose, and it would but freeze," whispered Charlie, "her ladyship might then slide right down among us." This remark provoked a slight titter, which betrayed the presence of the others to Lady Tarragon's outraged gaze.

"Ah, Tarragon, I see you hadn't the courage to come alone," she cried, in tones of most withering contempt. "Well, gentlemen, I am grateful to you for bringing my husband to my help," continued she, in a raised voice; "but please come up; this is no time to think of trifles"—with a modest, downward glance at those skinny legs. "There's something in my room, or near my room, and it's groaning. Oh, I have been almost wild with fear!"

In another moment the whole party were in the sacred privacy of her ladyship's bedroom.

"It's there!" she cried, pointing to the bed.

In a second the bed was rolled away, and Charlie, lying on the ground with his ear against the wainscot, after a short silence cried:

"By Jove, you are right, Lady Tarragon! There *is* something there, and whatever it is it isn't rats. If it weren't so impossible I should say it was *some one*."

"Oh, quite impossible, Charlie; how can people get behind a wainscot?"

"Well, it's not so impossible, either," exclaimed Lord James. "This part of the house is very old, and there are all sorts of secret corridors and holes behind the walls, but there's no entrance out of here that I know of. Come on, though, anyhow we'll go and see," he cried. "There is a sliding panel I know of in the up-stair library, but I don't believe it has a passage round here."

Seizing a candle from the dressing-table, he rushed from the room, closely followed by the others. On reaching the library, he made straight for the bookshelves at the far corner, opposite the door, pressed his finger upon what appeared to be an old dictionary, which stood in the centre of a row of fat books, when there was a slight click, as of a spring working; then pushing against the shelf, it seemed to resolve itself into a door, which, giving way to the pressure, rolled back, showing a black vista beyond. Into this, holding the candle above his head, Jim dived, crying, "Take care; there is a staircase here." Then he sped along so quickly that he and his candle were almost out of sight before the others came tumbling after him in single file. At the bottom of the stairs the passage turned to the right, and, after running along for some little distance, led into a large square room, almost as big as the library itself. All seemed dark and still to the little crowd who had now entered it, and Jim was just pausing, as though to wonder what they should do next, when a groan burst upon their horrified ears—a

groan that seemed almost at their feet. It was a weird, uncanny sound to listen to—a sudden groan in the darkness, coming, as it did, from a chamber which looked as though disused for at least a century. But little doubt was there that it was the groan of a human being—moreover, as human beings don't groan for pleasure—a human being in distress. Jim raised his light in the direction of the sound, and then rushed forward. There before him on the ground, lay a spectacle pitiable to behold. A little boy, weak and wan, to all intents and purposes dead, lay upon the floor, crouched against the wall, his eyes starting from his head, gazing at his rescuers in a manner which told them that all consciousness had fled. This, then, was what had caused those sounds and frightened Lady Tarragon. It was the groaning of this poor child, right against the wall, at the back of her bed in the next room, which had alarmed that ordinarily self-composed dame, and caused her to summon help for a timely rescue.

An exclamation of horror burst from Jim's lips, while the others gave vent to their relief and surprise in words. Relief, that what they had sought was no worse, and surprise, that this thing should be.

"This must be the little boy my mother was telling you about this evening. How did he get here?" cried Jim, as Cecil, bending down, lifted the poor child in his arms; as tenderly as a woman he raised him from the floor to the safe haven of his strong grasp.

1. 2019年12月31日，公司总资产为1,000,000,000.00元，净资产为500,000,000.00元。

The scene is then taken the staircase and the three men began to ascend their steps. The first was the light one, last with his fragile body, then the stout, burly & robust person, and last, but not least, the vigorous fragments of man who gave the work a harder heart high above the head the other meaning a little child in his arms. Following on the old swimming along those dark, gloomy stairs.

Then their father the library they were met by John and Harry Longyear and several of the servants who had been aroused at the unusual disturbance. John was the first to speak when Cecil produced his burden and laid it carefully upon one of the couches in the room. By this time the child seemed to have rallied a little, and looked around him with an approaching return to sensibility.

Without asking questions or wasting time on idle wonder Lord Lynnyear immediately despatched a messenger for the doctor, while his wife gave orders for a room to be prepared and food and milk got ready. Then the child was carried away, and kind Lady Lynnyear herself ministered to his wants, and in a very few days he was so far recovered as to be able to be sent home, restored and well. It was, of course, proved that this was the missing boy for whom the

whole country-side had searched. When sufficiently recovered, he was able to relate how, while being shown over the house with his parents and their friends, they had been shown the sliding door. This book door, as he called it, had so tickled his fancy that when the party had reached the picture-gallery he determined to go back and see if it would work for him. So, watching his opportunity, he slipped away unobserved, gained the library, touched the spring, and entered the secret passage. To his horror the door closed behind him, and he was alone in the darkness. The awfulness of his situation burst upon him, and the poor child told how he then realised what he had done. In vain he shouted, in vain he cried. That old library was too seldom used for him to be rescued by any occupant of the room; and even had it been otherwise, those walls were too thick for any sound which he could make to be heard beyond. He wandered on, falling down a staircase and groping his way till he came to the corner wherein he was found. He told of his hunger and his thirst, and how, half mad with both, he had knelt in the darkness and repeated the prayers he had been taught by his mother to say; how again he had cried and screamed till, worn out, he had fallen asleep. He remembered no more. How his cries had not been heard before, will for ever remain a mystery, unless it be that while engaged in making her toilet and worrying her maid, Lady Tarragon was far too occupied to attend to any sound which

might otherwise have attracted attention. It is true the maid had heard rats, she afterwards confessed, "but there were always those in these dirty old castles;" and putting away her mistress's things, she had hurried off to supper and the assertion of her right to the honour of the butler's arm.

It was not, therefore, till hearing had been rendered more acute by the stillness of night and, perhaps, the removal of a weight of hair unfavourable to the transmission of sound, that Lady Tarragon had been able to take notice of that faint, heartrending noise. Meanwhile, the parents of the child did not become aware of its absence for a time, and when they did, but fancied he had wearied of the house and pictures, and wandered off through the park to their place of meeting at the top of Lynn Hill. No thought of his awful fate presented itself to their minds—death from hunger and thirst, within a few yards of a table spread with all the luxuries which money could buy, and glasses sparkling with water and with wine.

Oh, the joy of that reunion—the lost one restored to its mother—snatched from the jaws of death! Nothing would content Jim less than going himself to find out the parents, and break to them the good news; and when the bereaved couple came down in the dead of night to find who had so disturbed their rest, they saw this handsome lad, mounted on a horse whose condition betokened the pace at which he had sped, his eyes sparkling with pleasure,

pleasure he was about to impart, and smiles upon his lips; and he told them for what he had come. Truly, his were glad tidings of great joy. And to their dying day this worthy pair will relate the story of the vision they saw on that calm summer's night, and how at first they thought a messenger straight from Heaven itself had arrived to comfort them in their distress and turn their mourning into joy. Jim, in his impulsive way, had galloped off to the cottage on the first horse he could procure; but his mother, more thoughtful, had caused a dog-cart to follow after him, so that the parents of the poor little lad might be conveyed back to the castle. Her mother's heart had divined that the woman would wish to seek the bedside of her son. And here these poor people fade from our story.

The tale I have told was an episode of a few hours only, but its memory is not yet dead, and it has resulted in greater precautions being taken when visitors are shown the wonders of hospitable Lynn-year, and also in a life-long popularity for our young friend Jim, whom the people on his father's estate little short of worship; so much so, that one would almost believe, to hear the story as told at many an humble fireside, that Jim himself had stormed the castle, and single-handed rescued the child from danger and death, as might have been done in the less prosaic times of his ancestors—such a long way will a little thoughtfulness at the right

moment go, and sympathy for another in time of trouble.

A servant might have taken "the glad tidings of great joy," as well as Lord James; a servant might have nursed the child, pending the arrival of its mother, as well as could Lady Lynnyear; but they did these things themselves, and it is such little tokens of "a fellow-feeling" which make so "wondrous kind," that knit together in a common love the great and little, the rich and poor, of English country homes, forming a barrier of friendship too strong to be rudely set aside by those who dream of a millenium of equality to be brought about by the sowing of discontent and the setting of classes one against another.

" Life is foam and bubble,
Two things stand like stone—
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in one's own."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CRICKET MATCH.

THE next morning, as may be supposed, there was much inquiry after the sick child, and a great deal of conversation and comment upon the adventure of the preceding night. As the heroine, in the shape of Lady Tarragon, sat at breakfast in her usual solemn, placid manner, one would have hardly recognised the same wild-looking female who had stood at the top of the stairs when Charlie had suggested her sliding down upon a hose. Fine feathers make fine birds, and most certainly clothes assisted by artless touches of art may so improve nature as to render it almost beyond recognition. And what a blessing it is that this is so. Where scenery is concerned nature is better than art, but where it is a matter of humanity, art far outstrips nature, inasmuch as art is able to disguise much that is unlovely and decorate that which is plain. Rouge brings color to the faded cheek; and the bones of a whale, when manipulated with skill, are capable of giving "figure" where no figure may exist.

These are strange reflections, but they came to me in strange places, places where whales remained in possession of their own flexible bones, and people

lived contented with their own "figures"—or rather the lack of them—adorned with no ornaments more choice than ivory teeth and glistening shells, or garments more oppressive than such a coat as may be constructed from oil.

Most of the party were chatting gaily. The ladies, including, as I have said, Lady Tarragon, looked fresh and blooming. It was a lovely morning and an ideal day for cricket.

"I congratulate you on the weather for your match, Lord James," said Constance. "Just the day for a game. I hope you all feel as good as the weather," continued this young lady, addressing the men in general, though most of them were too busy to hear her, all being intent upon the absorbing occupation of making little journeys to and fro between the table and the sideboard, ministering to the wants of the ladies, but more often to those of their own, for, as is the case in the majority of English country-houses, no servants were allowed in the room at breakfast—an excellent idea in theory, as it renders the meal more homelike and prevents there being any *gêne* caused by the presence of obsequious menials; but in practice it is rather a bore for the men to be obliged to make the little journeys above spoken of, and to some men, like Lord Ringwood indeed, whose laziness had become chronic and almost a part of his nature, this custom was something greater than a bore—"it was an infernal nuisance," he was wont to say, when wondering what the deuce

a fellow can manage to swallow himself, and feeling as sulky as a bear to be also obliged to wonder what the woman next you wants to eat, and then be sent off to fetch her a plateful of pie from the side-board, and put before her a helping large enough to take away your own appetite for a week. And then while ramming down mouthfuls that make a fellow shudder, she turns round and wants to talk, perhaps chaff, even, and expects a fellow to be amusing. "Oh, it's quite awful," he would wind up with in a serio-comic voice.

But I don't think any one could have accused Lord Ringwood of being amusing at breakfast, whatever they may have ventured to expect, and it was generally admitted that he was most undesirable company at that meal, and were best left alone. Indeed, he made no secret of his boorishness at this early hour, and would say:

"Any one who speaks to me now, does so at his or her own risk. I've no manners, no voice, and certainly no smiles at this hour of the morning. I open out gradually, like the flowers," he explained. "My good humour is slow to expand, and it is not till the day is thoroughly aired that I have really reached my own sweet expansive and expanded humour."

"Are you going to play, Lord Ringwood?" continued Constance, who loved to tease this indolent specimen of English nobility.

"Can't say yet, Miss Courtown," he answered, "it's a secret. Here dear boy (turning towards Ger-

ald, who was on his way to the sideboard), now you are up, you may as well get me some of that kipper I see over there. I'd do the same for you, old chap, if I were moving."

"Which you certainly won't be, if you can help it," answered Gerald, laughing, good-naturedly taking the proffered plate.

"Oh, Mr. Drayton, how can you?" exclaimed Constance; "no wonder Lord Ringwood is lazy, if you men encourage him like that."

"Miss Courtown," said Ringwood, deprecatingly, "why prevent a fellow's doing a good action? My master told me at school that a man should always begin the day with a good action, and if he did this his day would be a happy one. Now, Gerald here has the luck to find a good action thrust right in his way, in the shape of saving me a journey; therefore, he has earned a happy day; and by trying to prevent his being good to me, you would spoil his happy day; and if it weren't for me, Gerald wouldn't have found this opportunity of doing good; therefore, in providing that opportunity, I, also, am guilty of a good action; and, according to my schoolmaster, I, too, am entitled to a happy day; and yet, if you had your way," he continued, reproachfully, "Miss Constance, you would be the means of preventing two very deserving individuals from having a happy day."

"Well, that is certainly one way of looking at it," laughed Constance. "I believe, Lord Ringwood,

that whatever you did, you would contrive to torture yourself into the belief that you were acting solely and only from unselfish motives, and that whatever was the outcome of these motives would be right."

"I should certainly try to," said Ringwood modestly. Then turning to Gerald, as that good-natured person deposited the desired kipper before him, "Continue the conversation for me, dear boy; Miss Constance wants a little conversation, and I'm not equal to it just yet, but you are young and strong, and I dare say, willing," he added with a chuckle. "Tackle him, Miss Constance, *do*, and I'll be so pleasant to you later in the day; I really will."

As may be supposed, Gerald was nothing loth to continue the conversation with Constance, even though it had been begun by another, and besides these two there were others among the party who were less averse to conversation than Lord Ringwood.

Mona, as usual, looked the same; sweet and beautiful, radiant in the morning as she ever was at night. With kind looks and kinder words for everybody alike, she almost made people about her feel fresh and good-natured themselves from the very force of example. Florence, too, looked happy. There was a light in her eyes which told of a new-found joy. Cecil was hovering round her, paying small attentions and anticipating her every wish. "What a man," she thought, as she gazed upon that stalwart frame.

Had she not a right to be happy ? She, who had conquered this tender giant and held bound as her very own, one who had run the gauntlet of universal spoiling and admiration.

“ Personally I am rather like Lord Ringwood at breakfast time, and therefore it cannot be expected of me, that I should dwell over recollections of that meal, albeit these recollections are but on paper; therefore will I do nought but chronicle the fact that each of our friends partook of his or her breakfast according to their several characters; and that the ordeal of breakfast is a great portrayer of character, no one will I think deny.”

It was not long after breakfast that the cricketers found their way on to the cricket ground. There the tents had been erected, and all the numerous arrangements made which are customary in a country-house match. Two men were rolling “the pitch” with a heavy roller, and this well flattened strip of turf was being closely inspected by the intending players. After a time the enemy arrived in two of the Lynn-year carriages, which had been sent to meet them. The opposing team was chiefly composed of the gentry from the surrounding neighbourhood, and among them was numbered most of the local talent that the county could boast. It was only a one-day match, and the game was looked upon more in the light of an outing than as real sober cricket; nevertheless, there were several good players on either side.

Jim, in his position as Captain, called the toss for choice of innings. "Heads," he cried, as the coin spun in the air.

"Tails it is, hooray!" shouted the visitors, while a chorus of "Jimmy, you duffer, why didn't you call tails," greeted the ill luck of the home team. The winners of the toss were not long before they elected to go in, and by eleven o'clock sharp the game commenced. When the ladies came out of the house to look on, the telegraph reported 3 for 60. Things were not going too well for the Lynnyear people. Runs were coming fast, and though Cecil was bowling his hardest, still the score mounted up; it almost made him sad to see some of his very best balls go for two—balls which he knew that a really good player would have stopped at home to play, but which the present batsmen, with a want of science and that boldness which people display when ignorant of the reality of their danger, stepped out to, and sent flying, in a manner which in theory they had no earthly right to do. But though the theory may have been wrong, yet was their practice efficient, for two young men had now been in for some half hour or more, and it did not look as if they ever intended getting out. Jim had missed a rather hard catch, low down in the slips, which had caused Gerald to call out to that discomforted individual, "Holloa, butter-fingers, how about that single-wicket match?" but barring this accident, the fielding had been really excellent, for such a scratch team. But the glory of ef-

fecting a separation between these two batsmen, who appeared to be most obstinately "set," was reserved for Lord Ringwood. He was fielding "long leg," and, as everyone knows, that position is one of the most difficult in the field, and to those who watched him dashing at the ball, picking it up, and returning it smartly, it seemed hard to believe that this was the same languid individual who had refused to speak while he ate his breakfast. Many constitutionally lazy men are the quickest at games, even as the dandiest of London's spoilt darlings, to whom the simulation of fatigue has become an art, have frequently proved what they can do, and how splendidly they can fight, when necessity arises for them to pull themselves together, and do battle for their country.

Well, Lord Ringwood had been fielding out in rare form, when one of the "sloggers" presently sent a leg ball flying for six, as it appeared; and as the ball started, off started "long leg," tearing along in the direction of the tent in which the ladies were now seated. He got there in time, almost; the ball was just in front of him—he couldn't quite reach it, but stretching out his right hand as a last despairing chance, the ball fell into it, and he held it fast—held it fast, although his feet caught in the ropes of the tent, and he came flying on to his head, right at the feet of the admiring crowd; but the ball was held aloft—he disdained to save his head at the expense of his catch, and—the man was out.

"Well caught, Ringwood," shouted everyone, excitedly.

"Bravo, Lord Ringwood," chorused the ladies, as that gentleman rose to his feet and modestly bowed his acknowledgments.

"Really, I shouldn't have given you credit for being able to run like that," said Constance. "How did you do it ? I had no idea you could ever go out of a walk. I couldn't believe it was you."

"Well," he answered, in his usual manner, "it was an awful bore, and I don't think I should ever have got here if it hadn't been for the presence of the ladies, who attracted me like a magnet. It is all due to you, Miss Mona," he added. "I just caught sight of your eyes, which wore such a look of excitement that I swore I would do or die rather than disappoint you."

"Very good of you, Lord Ringwood," said Mona. "I really was awfully excited. I didn't think it possible you could reach the ball."

"Didn't you ?"—in a low voice. "Inspired, as I told you I was, everything was possible."

At this little speech Mona raised her eyebrows, as though slightly puzzled. It was no use paying compliments to her; she only looked puzzled, as though to say, "What *do* you mean ?"

"Man in, man in !" shouted the others, and Ringwood had to leave the tent and take up his stand in front of it at cover point, for "the ball was over." The next batsman did not make a long stay, nor the

next; and by luncheon-time the whole side were out for the very decent total of 120. The ladies had all gone in to luncheon in the house, but promised to return to see their side in. The cricketers repaired to the tent, where was an excellent meal provided by the hospitality of their noble host. The house luncheon was a slightly dull one, owing to the absence of the most lively men of the party, which the presence of a few uninteresting additions from the neighbourhood only made the more keenly felt. The tent luncheon was very similar to other cricket lunches. There was the same chaff, the same attempts to shirk sitting opposite to and carving the huge joints which were on the table, and the same pretended groanings from those who eventually took upon themselves the task of cutting up the food, in reality, perhaps, not altogether sorry to have such an opportunity for displaying their skill; and when the joints had been disposed of, there was the same betting upon the contents of the enormous tarts which replaced them. "Two to one on gooseberry, three to one against cherry," were the wagers shouted round the table. "Take you in bobs," cried Jimmy, taking up the latter offer, after having critically examined the outer crust of the dish before him. "Three to one against cherry taken—any more? No. Then here goes." And as he thrust the spoon through the yielding top, out spurted a dark, black juice which betrayed the contents as black currants.

"Bah!" exclaimed Jimmy, "I'm done; fancy black

currants ! Who ever heard of black currants in a tart ? Well, I've lost my bob to learn something new. Here, who goes ? Who'll have black currant tart ?" he continued. And thus, as it has a thousand times before, the cricket lunch, with its joints, its pies, its bobs and its currants, went serenely on. Not much to chronicle here, perhaps; but at the same time, when all are good-humoured and everyone is happy, the smallest joke will raise a smile, and joints and tarts produce content.

CHAPTER XV.

PIGS.

Now, I had quite forgotten to mention that among the curiosities at the castle were two wonderful pigs—not wonderful from any great dissimilarity to other pigs in point of appearance, but wonderful on account of their high intelligence and dog-like affection. It is not often one sees a pig converted into a pet, though it has sometimes happened that people have lavished caresses upon this much-abused animal. Indeed, in one case I can recollect a young couple who were brought to the very verge of the divorce court because the husband, who had a mania for rearing pigs, would insist upon taking a weakly little infantile specimen into the nuptial chamber, and get up in the night to attend to its wants, whenever it emitted a squeal of discontent. However, such a sad ending to domestic happiness was happily averted by the death of the pig.

But the Lynnyear pigs were not dead; they were very much alive, and more than that even, for they could do tricks. Two medium sized white pigs with a piece of blue ribbon round their necks are most fascinating when they do tricks. You smile incredulously, but why? Have you ever met pigs such as

cribe? Well, at any rate, these pigs certainly flattered Mona. She said they were the loveliest she had ever seen. It was a case of beauty and the beast, though if I remember rightly, I don't think beauty was ever guilty of describing the beast falsely.

When you touched one of these pigs on the tip of its snout, it would sit up and beg; so, too, would the others. And these pigs begging like dogs, Mona described as "lots of fun." Then, again, if you pressed one in the body with the point of your finger, it would emit a most terrible squeal and lie down and die; its imitative companion would sympathisingly squeal in chorus, and then, it would proceed to expire. At a touch from a pin or any similar weapon upon their ears they might be brought back to life with another squeal, presumably a squeal of joy, though its sound was extremely similar to the death cry of the first. Now, it happened that after lunch Mona reclined on the lawn, and by her lay these two pigs, who, apparently flattered by the friendship, seemed to seek her society and follow her wherever she went; and, as though to reward their fidelity, they seemed to tire of putting them through their little repertoire of tricks. It was a quaint scene, this lovely girl reclining in an easy-chair beneath the shade of an ancient oak. Around her shoulders were brilliant in the hot glare of an afternoon sun, while almost at her feet there glis-

tended the sparkling waters of the lake. A half-amused smile was on her face, and the light of laughter shone beneath the heavy lashes which shaded those glorious eyes, as she gazed downwards at her friends, the pigs, who lay upon the grass grunting with a well-fed content. So absorbed was she in her occupation of doing nothing, that she scarcely heard approaching footsteps, as Ringwood, having caught sight of her from afar, came across the lawn to join her, and enjoy a pleasant half hour in her society while waiting his turn to go in at cricket. It was a funny thing that this girl, the most unworldly, the most simple, and the most unaffected of all that party, should have been the very girl to attract a man who, on his side, was the very opposite—a regular man of the world, a disbeliever in “sweet simplicity,” and blasé where he should be happy. But thus it was, though had you spoken to him of sweet simplicity, he most probably would have answered, “Bosh.” Yet here he was, escaping from the cricket field, where, by rights, he should have been, and stealing across the lawn to join the very incarnation of that same sweet simplicity—simplicity wasted on pigs.

“Bah!” he exclaimed, almost before he reached her side; “bah! Miss Mona, how can you encourage those squealing brutes! Talk of wasting sweetness on desert air: I never saw sweetness wasted on a pig before. Let me drive them away.”

“Lord Ringwood,” said Mona, looking up at

him with a smile, "why should you dislike the pigs? I think they are quite lovely. Live and let live; and why shouldn't these little piggies live?" giving the one nearest to her a poke with her parasol on his ear, which caused it to squeal aloud and half raise itself from the ground, at which the other immediately did the same.

"Oh, let them live, by all means, Miss Mona," exclaimed Lord Ringwood, his fingers to his ears; 'but please, if you have any regard for me, don't let them make that terrific noise. But probably you haven't any regard for me," he said hurriedly, seating himself on the ground at her feet. "Your affections are so centred upon those beribboned swine that no other fellow has a chance—"

"What other fellow?" asked Mona, lifting her eyes in her usual wondering manner, though an amused smile that played round her lips betokened that she was not in reality very much puzzled at this moment. "What other fellow?" she repeated. "Another pig?"

"Oh, certainly; pig, if you like," responded Ringwood, rather testily. "Of course, if you won't understand me, you won't, Miss Courtown; and if it leases you to liken me to a pig, I suppose you are at liberty to do so."

"Liken you to a pig, Lord Ringwood!" said Mona, ghast, touching one of those animals with the point of her parasol, which caused the party thus molested to sit up on end and squeal dismally, at

which his companion immediately followed suit. "Why, Lord Ringwood," she added, when this hubbub was over, "how could you be so absurd? Why, *you* couldn't do that."

"Couldn't do what?" he replied, kicking viciously in the direction of her pets.

"Why, that," said Mona, laughing. "You affect to despise these lovely beasts, and yet they are more accomplished than you are. Try, then," she went on, fairly laughing at the expression of disgust upon the face of her companion. "Now, then, compete," and she touched him lightly with the pointed end of her parasol.

"Well, really, Miss Mona," ejaculated this much-teased individual, "I wouldn't have thought it of you"—he was all laughter now; the mirth in that lovely face was too contagious to be withstood. "Well, I verily do believe you were comparing me to a pig. No one ever did that before, I assure you. I'm not a bit insulted," he added. "It's a new sensation, and I love new sensations."

"No, Lord Ringwood," said Mona, laughing like a happy child, "I didn't liken you to a pig. Only you were so cross about the pigs, I wanted to show you that really they can do something you cannot do. *You* can't squeal and beg."

"Well, I don't want to. But, yes, I do, when I come to think of it," he added.

"*You want* to?" ejaculated Mona, with nothing false about her wonderment now.

"Well, no, I don't want to squeal; but I want to beg. Yes, please be serious," he went on. "I want to beg something of you"; and as he spoke, he gazed up at her with a glance full of meaning, which should have warned her of what was coming, but Mona could not take such warnings. She never would believe that men were going to make love to her, and when they did she simply didn't understand what they meant.

"What makes people make love to me, mamma?" she would ask her mother, like some little child. "I wish they wouldn't, it does so spoil everything. Why can't they be just sensible and jolly without saying such silly things? it upsets all one's fun."

And here, now, was Lord Ringwood about to upset all the fun, for it *was* fun to sit here in the shade with a handsome young man and a couple of pigs at her feet, all three to tease in turn whenever the fancy took her.

"Well, beg away," laughed Mona. "I hope you're not going to beg me to send these pigs away, because I shall have to refuse you."

"No; confound the pigs!" answered Ringwood, now speaking in earnest, as he raised himself on to his right elbow and lay looking fixedly upwards at the figure above him. "Keep your pigs. Amuse yourself by making them squeak if it really does amuse you; but oh, Mona, keep a little of the affection you lavish on those dumb animals and give it to me. That is what I want to beg of you, Mona."

"A little of my affection!" she answered, after a slight pause. "A little of my affection!" she repeated, raising her eyes to look at her companion, as though to see whether he were in joke or in earnest, but that look did more to find out for her than any amount of puzzling her brains would have done—small doubt but that Ringwood was in earnest now. That look met his, and straightway mastering him, this proud and languid man raised himself from his recumbent position on to his knees, and there before her, in attitude of extreme supplication, poured forth:

"Oh, Mona, I love you! It isn't your *affection* that I want; keep that for the pigs; I want your *love*; you are so different from any one else; you are still a child, and perhaps cannot know what a man like myself can feel; but say you will love me—Mona, love me just a little."

And as the girl continued to look down upon him, meeting his gaze to the very full, her eyes still speaking of nothing but a vague wonder at the turn affairs had taken, he stretched out his hand to take hers—but alas for sentiment! alas for love! Whatever prospect of success Lord Ringwood may have had, whatever influence the suddenness of the proceeding or the unexpectedness of his attack may have wrought upon that childish heart, it was lost; lost by the very *coup de main* which, perhaps, might have conquered all; for as he stretched out his hand to seize that other which lay so unresisting in her lap,

his foot just slightly came in contact with the tail of the nearest pig. Then the nearest pig gave forth his squeal of intelligence and reared him on to his two hind legs, in almost the self-same attitude of supplication as that already adopted by his lordship.

Nor was that all, for echo, in the shape of pig number two, came back in another squeal—but, oh, such a prolonged, drawn out sound, as though protesting against this uncalled-for disturbance of his rest—and up, too, he went upon his hind legs, but on the other side of the kneeling lover.

Now I ask you, could any one, however carried away by his feelings, however in earnest, make love under such circumstances as these? Could the most ardent lover convey to his eyes that proper amount of tenderness when kneeling at the feet of his adored one, on either side of him a pig, also kneeling, also begging? No, never! Ridicule kills love, and in this case it certainly killed, for the time at any rate, Lord Ringwood's wooing; for Mona, after struggling with all her might against the desire to laugh, at length gave way. The expression of disgust in Lord Ringwood's eyes was so far more visible than that of tenderness; and as he looked sideways at each of his uninvited allies, his countenance was so expressive—containing such a mixture of varied emotions—that it was too much for Mona. The laughter would out; she could not help it, if she died; and, leaning back in her chair, she gave it vent, and laughed as she had never laughed be-

fore. As for Lord Ringwood, to say he looked disconcerted at the turn affairs had taken, would be only a part of the truth. He looked first at Mona, who lay laughing in her chair, then to the right of him, at the begging pig, and then to the left of him, at the other; then realising the absurdity of the scene, he, too, laughed; even if the position had not been so ludicrous, Mona's hearty laughter would have been impossible to resist; and lying full length upon the grass, he also exploded and rolled about in all the convulsions of uncontrollable mirth.

At that moment a shout of "Ringwood! Ringwood!" was heard; "Ringwood, where are you? it's your turn to go in." And as the least conscientious of mankind would not absent himself from the field when his cricket captain calls, the individual thus waited for rose from the ground and prepared to go.

"Well, Miss Mona, those pigs were too much for me," he said, rather ruefully. "I never expected to be cut out by a pig before."

"Oh, Lord Ringwood," almost sobbed Mona, still battling with her only half-finished laughter, "I am so sorry; but it was too comic"—and here she laughed again—"but it served you right for being so ridiculous; why did you want to spoil everything like that? It's so nice being good friends and having a good time; but it *is* so silly to talk nonsense, as you began to do. You're not offended, are you?" she continued, in her sweetest voice, at the same time giving him a look which must have melted

the most offended man on earth. "You'll forgive me for laughing, won't you, and promise not to do it again? Let's be friends, Lord Ringwood," holding out her hand, "good, sensible friends, I mean. You are so much nicer when you're sensible."

"All right, Mona," answered Ringwood, with a sudden half relapse into tenderness; "I won't bore you with any more love-making, nor will I any one else, for that matter. I really have loved you as I never thought I was capable of feeling; but there, what's the good of talking about it!" he added, hastily; "may you be happy, whoever you marry, and may we two always be friends." And shaking her hand, he turned on his heel and walked quickly towards the cricket ground.

Ah, Mona, were you right in your childishness and inexperience to throw aside the love of a good, kind-hearted gentleman like him who has just left you?

But Mona, herself didn't wonder; she knew nothing about such things; as she was, she was very happy. Why, then, seek to inquire what it was, that love of which she heard so much? So, rather graver, perhaps—for in a way she felt for Lord Ringwood, though she could not quite believe he was in earnest, really—she resumed her seat, and continued to contemplate the pigs "in maiden meditation, fancy free."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WINNING HIT.

MEANWHILE the cricket match was still going on. It promised to be a very closely fought game. When Ringwood got to the ground, he found that the score stood at ninety for seven wickets. Thirty more runs to tie—thirty-one to win! Many were the voices which impressed upon him the necessity of making a stand and playing carefully; but Ringwood was in no mood for exhibiting extraordinary patience, and he hit viciously at the first ball, as though he had a grudge against it for being such a straight one.

"By Jove! Ringwood won't stop long if he plays like that," said some one.

But the next ball being a little on the leg side, Ringwood swiped again, and this time, catching it full, the ball went flying over the trees for six. Loud applause followed this feat, though most felt it was but a flash in the pan.

"What the devil's the matter with Ringwood?" said Jimmy. He generally plays such cool and careful cricket, I didn't think he had the energy to smack one as hard as that."

Well, the next ball proved that this exhibition of strength was indeed but a flash, as had been predict-

ed; for, coming slightly on the off side, Ringwood struck wildly at it, as though to repeat his recent performance, but it broke right in and took his leg stump; thus he was out.

"A short life and a merry one," said he, as he regained the tent and the next man took his place. Eight wickets for 96.

When the next two wickets fell, the score stood at 119. Two more runs to win! Jim had to go in. He was horribly nervous, nor were the frequent instructions to "stick to it, old boy, and pull off the match" calculated to make him less so. The other side were terribly keen, and fielding up like mad. The first ball Jim played, but in a nervous, half-hearted way; and if "point" had been a little more on the alert, he might have taken him off his bat. The second ball he managed to snick to the slips and gain a flukey run. The score was now a tie, and the scorers in the tent rose to their feet. The man in, at the other end, was one of the household—not much of a cricketer. He was the individual who looked after the steam engine pump, and as his personal name was unknown he stood in the score-book as George En Gein. Now, the next ball came to Mr. En Gein, and he, thirsting to distinguish himself and win the match, stepped out to it, gave one tremendous "wipe," and caught the ball fair; but instead of sending it far, he sent it high—never was such a skyer—right above the head of "long on." A breathless silence followed. "Long on" and the bowler both

rushed for it. Each gazed at the ball, head in air; each judged it, and then each becoming conscious of the proximity of the other, and thinking that he was going to take it, left it alone, and there fell the ball between the two of them.

Meantime the batsmen had run, the desired run was obtained, and to this day George En Gein narrates to his friends how he won "that blooming match."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST EVENING.

SHORTLY afterwards, the opposite XI left the ground in the carriages which had brought them, while the ringing cheers which they gave for the Lynnyear XI were answered back to the full, by those gentlemen, who had assembled to see them start. Thus ended a cheery day, and one of those country-house matches which are always such a feature of summer life in England. But the day itself was not quite over; the home team adjourned to the lawn and there lounged about beneath the trees until it should be time to go in and dress for dinner. There was a general feeling of regret amongst the party, that they would be obliged to break up on the morrow. Cecil had to join his regiment; Gerald and others were to return to town; while James and his college friends were expected at a cricket match on the other side of the county. The Courtown family intended to remain a few more days, before going home, to make preparations for their return to America. They were to spend another fortnight in town, a week or two in Paris, and then across the Atlantic to their home. The party on the lawn had soon grouped itself according to fancy. It is

wonderful how parties pair off, and couples manage to arrange a tête-à-tête, in an unconscious, easy manner, calculated to blind the most observant, and leave unaroused the most alert of suspicions. It is very amusing to watch some women manoeuvre to attain their little ends, those ends of course being the acquisition of that individual of the other sex whose company they at that moment particularly desire. To watch the men playing at the same game is not so amusing, as they do it awkwardly, and without that tact and *finesse* which a woman alone knows how to employ.

On this occasion, as may be supposed, Florence had not much difficulty in wandering off with her Cecil, while Gerald in his clumsy way deserted Lady Tarragon—just when she was feeling that she had positively captivated this charming young man—and rushed after Constance, who looked as if she were going for a walk with Charlie Summers; only looked, I say, because Constance had no more idea of walking with anyone else but Gerald, than Gerald had any idea of permitting her to do so. But he did not know that, and so, just to tease him, and watch him struggling to show an interest in Lady Tarragon's conversation, while his whole heart was persuading him to get up and fly, Constance made a feint at departure, which brought about the desired effect. She had done nothing which anyone could by any possibility have observed, while Gerald, being a man, and an awkward one too, probably "did

for" himself in the matter of the Tarragon dining list for ever, at the same time publishing to the world that he was extremely anxious to accompany Miss Constance Courtown in her search after flowers for that evening's wear. They did not go far, however, but still "half a loaf is better than no bread," and to take a walk with the object of your adoration as far as the nearest rose-bush only, is better than to take no walk with her at all, and also, ever so much better than to sit still and talk to a cross old lady, while that adored object calmly strolls off for a walk with another fellow—at least so thought Gerald, as he did Constance's bidding and reached for her each of the crimson flowers which that young lady pointed out.

"Won't you come for a longer walk, Miss Constance," he pleaded; let's take a stroll round the garden.

"Why, what for?" she replied, in affected surprise; "haven't you had enough exercise for one day? One would have thought you required a little rest."

"Why should I want rest? And if I was as tired as I could be, I would always be ready to take a walk with you, Miss Constance."

"Of course you would," was the answer; "it would be very odd if you weren't, but as I am not particularly fond of walking about with tired people, I won't put you to the test. Tired people get peevish, and I hate peevishness."

"Only children get peevish," answered Gerald. "I'm never peevish."

"Oh, yes you are," Mr. Drayton; "why, I call you positively peevish now, quite cross because I won't drag myself half a mile round the garden with you dragging after me, and you are actually prepared to argue about it; nice and tired and ugly I should look to-night at dinner if I followed out your programme. No, I must go and dress now; I want a long time to-night; first I have to cool, and then pull myself together for the effort of changing my clothes."

"Well, and I ought to be off, too," answered Gerald humbly; he never dared to "argue" further, as Constance called it, when she was in one of her contradictory moods. "I must go and have my tub; I didn't think of that when I wanted you to come for a walk."

"Oh, bother your tub, Mr. Drayton," said Constance; "how you English do talk of your tubs, one would think no one ever had a tub but yourselves, and then only when you have told every one of the fact. Why, since I have been in England, at least twenty men have told me they must be off to have their tub before they dress. Is it accounted such a great thing to have a tub that when you are going to take one you are so proud you can't help swaggering about it? Why, in our country we take tubs too, but then only as a matter of course, and I should be just as astonished out there if a man told me he was going in to tub, as he would probably be were I to tell him I was going to wear a clean white petticoat

on Monday morning; these things we take for granted over there."

"Oh, yes," 'over there' must be quite perfect, according to all you have told me," answered Gerald, laughing. "Perhaps it is, but I never knew before it was swagger to say one was going to tub, but when I come to think of it, you are probably right; there really is something in what you say," he continued, reflectively. "I won't swagger about it next time I wash."

"There, that's just it," said Constance; "next time you *wash*, as though it were a thing to do once a week; and as to my being right, I am always right; now own, don't you think I am always right?"

"Well, you are, mostly, I own," returned the obedient Gerald.

"Mr. Drayton," said Constance gravely, "I asked you if I were not always right, and you answered 'mostly.' Now, that is not an answer, it is prevarication. Once more, "am I *always* right, at least in your opinion?" and as she asked the question for the second time, Constance stood looking at the young man in a half-petulant, impatient manner, which made her seem to him the very fairest of the fair, as fair as those roses she now held in her hand.

"Well," he answered, after having looked at her smilingly, for the space of one second, "I'll answer on one condition."

"What is that; what condition?"

"Well," continued Gerald, slowly, seeming to en-

joy the look of expectation upon the face of his companion, "the condition is that you give me one of those roses."

"Here, take it," said Constance, thrusting one of the beautiful blossoms right under his nose.

"Oh, no; that will never do," said Gerald, most provokingly precise. "You must hold out that rose and say, 'Mr. Drayton, will you do me the favour of wearing that flower in your coat this evening?'" When the button-hole that is probably now on your dressing-table is handed you by your servant, you must say, 'No! Thomas, I will wear this red rose,' and then I will perhaps tell you whether you are right. Now, after me: 'Mr. Drayton, will you do me the favour—'"

"Will you do me the favour," said Constance, after a slight hesitation, and so on after him until she came to 'Thomas, I will wear this red rose.'"

"Thank you; thank you very much," said Gerald, at the conclusion of this little farce, taking the rose and pinning it in his flannel coat. "Miss Constance, you are right to give me this rose; you are right now and always, and whatever you may say or do I will ever declare to be right."

"Will you remember that!" said Constance, rather gravely. "Will you promise me you will never forget you told me that?"

"No, never," replied Gerald, without hesitation; "why should I ever forget?"

Ah, why? He little knew how difficult it would

be for him, not many months hence, to describe Constance's actions as right. But at this moment he was in the present, and the present was happiness enough for him. Sufficient unto the day, etc. His may have been a fools' paradise; but what luck for the fools that they possess this little Eden all to themselves ! So many of us are fools that we should be grateful to a merciful Providence who has given us this paradise as our own peculiar property. When Gerald asked, "Why should I ever forget ?" Constance laughed slightly and said, "Oh, why, I really don't exactly know why; only when people say pretty things to me, people I like," she qualified, looking at Gerald in her most bewitching manner, "I can't help wishing to tie them down to it, and, therefore, I make you promise never to forget that you once said I was always right. Now, come along," she added, with a change of tone, "we must go in ; I have to cool and then dress, which by the by, to my ideas, includes washing, while you have to go and tub, and then dress."

"Well, I will never tell an American again I'm going to tub," laughed Gerald. "Au revoir, Miss Right; may good fortune let me take you in to dinner."

Gerald was one of those men who look well in flannels, and as that white figure was vanishing down the long corridor, Constance turned and looked at him; she looked at him and sighed—for Constance

to sigh was such an unusual occurrence that I consider it worthy to be recorded here.

People, it is said, sigh for three things—greediness, laziness or love. Surely Constance could not be sighing for love—love for a penniless barrister. “Oh, no, never,” she said almost aloud when calling this saying to mind, “never, never, never. ’Tis money makes the world go round, and love is but an empty sound.’ No, it is probably greediness,” she concluded with a smile. “It’s nearly dinner-time, and as I had very little tea, I suppose I ought to be hungry.”

I have not followed Sinclair and Florence in their walk, for the very good reason that anyone who had listened to their conversation on a similar occasion last night could pretty well gather what it is they are saying to each other now.

When people make love, their words are merely possessed of a certain kind of interest until the climax is reached, or the love is made. When a man proposes and a woman accepts, there is nothing further to interest the lookers-on. We all know the after-part; these finales are the same precisely all the world over, everyone has done it and knows the programme by heart. The billing and cooing, the nonsense and the kissing seldom vary; it is only the manner in which these inevitable episodes are led up to which interests the general public. The inevitable episodes have occurred to the general public, and so of course has the beginning, but then you see, everyone begins in his own peculiar way; the kissing

everybody does like sheep. There is nothing new under the sun, and certainly in these matters there is very little which is original. Suffice it to remark that Florence went in to dress for dinner not much later than usual, and Cecil went to perform his toilet whistling a cheerful air, as though he were not particularly troubled by the want of variety in his *affaire du cœur*.

Dinner to-night was very much as dinner last night, though there were some slight changes in the order of going in, and, as is frequently the case after the order of precedence has been duly observed on the first night, lots were drawn to decide who should take in who. This is an excellent plan, as it prevents the poor host from taking in Lady Tarragon every night, and occasionally gives a chance to the lady of the house to procure a neighbour younger and more amusing than that which would naturally be allotted to her by the laws of that modern Mede, Sir Bernard Burke, Ulster King-at-Arms. There was also another difference to the preceding night. There were no maids peeping from the gallery. Sir Bernard had settled their rank for that visit, and there was no need for further search after information. After dinner, too, the same programme was duly observed, though, as it was a summer night, the windows were open and people were able to sit out in the open air. From thence Mona's singing sounded more charming than ever; and when those rich tones, which expressed themselves with such deep

feeling, "almost," as the saying is, brought tears to her hearers' eyes, they were enabled to allow that "almost" to become "quite" and permit a moisture to gather around their eyes, which the ever-kindly stars, in their sweet, faint light, would be unlikely to betray.

"This is our last night together," whispered Sinclair, stealing hold of Florence's hand in the darkness.

"Oh, don't say that, Cecil," was the low answer; "we shall meet in London and then, perhaps, over on the other side."

"In London—bah! What is London! A rush and a hurry. No one has a moment to spare in that horrible crowd."

"Haven't they?" she replied, with an arch look, which was utterly lost in that dim light. "I am glad of that, for I saw you for so many moments during these last few weeks, and I am glad that they were not moments which you could spare."

"Oh, you little punster," smiled Cecil, caressing the hand which lay hidden in his, beneath the friendly shelter of the leaves of an orange-tree; "but, really, London isn't the same as here. Isn't this heavenly?" he added, after a pause, "to sit here, hand in hand, gazing out upon the quiet all around while listening to your sister's voice making such sweet music in the other room. How can I ever hope to feel so happy again!"

"Cecil, dear, you and I are not of the sentimental

sort; if we are together, one place is as good as another. Here, London, America—what are they? Places only—surroundings and scenes which may change, shift or alter, time after time, and again and again; but we do not change, we shall not alter, and whether it be Lynnyear, London or on 'the other side,' I doubt if it would make much difference in our feelings one towards another."

"Right you are," replied Cecil. "You are a dear, practical little woman. You are of the sort who could love through good report or ill. Remember, Florence, this night, though Fate may prove unkind, or luck should be dead against us, as your sister sang the other night, no one can rob us of this moment; we shall always possess our 'have been.'"

At that moment, as though almost in answer to Cecil's words, Mona's voice rang out with the notes of the very song in question. Both the lovers listened in silence; only as the last verse was borne upon their ears and faded away into the gloom of the night beyond, Cecil gently bent forward, and unseen, thanks to the friendly orange-tree, as a seal of what he had said, gently pressed his lips upon that lovely face, upon which shone a world of trust, a smile of peace. No coquettish glance was there. Through good report or ill. Ah! what avail these tender vows, this oath of constancy, this affection's seal! What is man against the world, and what is love when weighed upon the balance against decrees of Fate! But yet 'tis something; a remnant will

remain when the present is the past and future is the present. Though ruthless ones may part these two; though Fate may tear asunder, still, as *Mona* sings, they are not robbed of all, their very all:

“ Though great is the distance dividing us twain,
While gulfs of long years roll between;
We will not bemoan, love, nor even complain,
But cherish, love, times that ‘have been.’ ”

The evening was soon over—too soon. It may be said of me that I have lingered too long over these days at *Lynnyear*, but do we not all love the peace before the storm? and is there anyone, who, looking ahead, sees trouble looming large and dark against the horizon of life, would not prefer to dwell by the way, make hay while the sun shines, and put off the evil day as long as he is able? Thus at *Lynnyear* the sun has been shining in more ways than one. Peace and happiness have had their day; love has had its innings, and flowed on its way more evenly and uninterruptedly than its course is proverbially supposed to run. We have made hay, and I have been in no hurry to hasten onward towards the inevitable shipwreck, the storm after the calm. Therefore have I been diffuse; but, when the sun is not shining, I promise to atone by forbearing to dwell by the way; brevity shall run side by side with any troubles I may be called upon to relate.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE JOKER "BILL."

To begin and carry out my promise at the very outset I will now relate, as quickly as I can, trouble No. 1. It is only a storm in a tea-cup ; or, rather, a slight cloud which overshadowed the hilarity of one party in the smoking-room that evening. As the cloud in question only overshadowed the hilarity of the gentleman by name of Lomax, with whose history we have but little to do, there is in this instance small need of pity. It will be remembered that when Lord Ringwood appeared in the smoking-room in his dress-coat, the night before, "Bill," as Lomax was more frequently called, threatened to tear it up, should he venture to repeat his visit in that costume. Now, Ringwood, as may have been observed, could appreciate a joke as well as most people, albeit he was, as a rule, too languid to take an active part in any joke himself; on this occasion, however, he strolled into the smoking-room rather later than the others, and in his usual nonchalant manner leant against the mantel-piece, filling his pipe with tobacco, his back to the rest of the company.

"Hallo, Ringwood !" exclaimed Lomax, "you are

an obstinate chap. There's that d——d old dress-coat of yours again. I told you I'd do for it, old man, and so I will !" So saying, he arose, and approached the mantel-piece. Everyone looked up, wondering how Ringwood would receive this bounce, or how he would avoid having an undignified struggle with the joker Bill, who, be it said, was frequently rather a reckless character when under the influence of champagne.

"Fire away, dear boy," replied Ringwood, without turning round, "fire away; only don't talk so much about it." Emboldened by Ringwood's good-natured way of taking things, and, perhaps, feeling that his reputation as a practical joker rested upon his present action, Lomax, without further ado, took the two tails of the offending coat in either hand, and, with one slit, tore the garment in twain.

There was almost a dead silence as the perpetrator of this outrage laughed a noisy, nervous sort of laugh, which sounded very forced by reason of no one else caring to join in his mirth. Ringwood alone, perfectly unconcerned, continued to fill his pipe, and then turning round, with his most placid smile, exclaimed, "Well, dear boy, I hope you're going to town to-morrow, because, if you don't, you won't have a coat to dine in."

"What do you mean?" asked Lomax, wondering.

"Well, simply this, mon cher, that these two rags"—holding out the severed ends—"are your property. For, knowing that you were a man of your

word, I told my servant to fetch me your coat after you had changed it, and then I brought it down-stairs on my back, so that you could tear it up at leisure without annoying anybody but yourself."

As might be expected, there was much laughter, in which Lomax was obliged to join, although he did not perhaps relish the joke as much as the others. But I fancy it was a lesson to him; and contemporary history does not relate that he has torn any more coats since that memorable night when he so ruined his own. With this exception the evening passed off quietly enough; nothing else disturbed the general harmony, and when the men retired to rest, half expecting to once more see the gaunt figure of Lady Tarragon at the top of the stairs, this vision was not there. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and if the young men were disappointed of a droll apparition, Lord Tarragon was not the least unhappy of that party at finding that the wife of his bosom was securely wrapped in the arms of Morpheus.

CHAPTER XIX.

GOODWOOD.

ON THE ROAD.

A COACH, one of many, was waiting at the Chichester station. It was the coach of the — hussars, now quartered at Brighton. The Sussex fortnight had begun, and this was the second day of the Goodwood week. The whole world of fashion was at Goodwood, or rather on the road thither, and among those journeying to that most beautiful of race-courses were our two friends, Gerald Drayton and Cecil Sinclair. They were the guests of the — hussars for the week, and each day went over from Brighton for the races. The regimental coach was “sent on,” and met the party at Chichester, thus enabling them to drive on to the course, returning the same way in the evening.

Everyone who has been to Goodwood knows that drive, that chaos of cabs, carriages, omnibuses and vans at the stations of Chichester and West Drayton; how in one long, slow procession these toil along the dusty roads—some years the ducal owner has them watered and lays the dust—or bump along the stony roads—some years the ducal owner takes

advantage of this voluntary traffic to restone his roads—but what matter, it's all in the day's work, and an inveterate race-goer would no more be deterred from indulging in his favourite sport by dust and stones than he would refrain from indulging in abuse of the noble owner thereof.

The coach which chiefly interests us at this moment, because it bears the persons of our two friends, goes merrily through the medley of vehicles which are all making for the same spot.

Cliff Laverstone, who is the regimental whip, not being one to allow any other team to pass him unless he thinks good and proper, it is not very long before the park gates are reached. Here the chaos sorts itself; the sheep are selected from the goats; the latter, in the shape of the vans and omnibuses, take the outer road up that terrible hill, the former, consisting of more aristocratic conveyances, including coaches, barouches, cabs, victorias, buggies, hansom and the seaside-fly, are permitted by Cerberus, who represents a committee of taste at the gate, to pass through and drive across the park.

Our friends were busy surveying the scene around them and recognising familiar features of the road, sights which seemed to be exactly as they had left them when bidden farewell on the preceding year. At the corner, on that patch of green where the roads to Chichester and West Drayton converge, sits the well-remembered form of the thimble-rigging

man; and looking over a hedge hard by, stands the same identical old farm horse, gazing calmly on all this traffic, all this noise, wondering, as he had apparently wondered any time during the last five years, what all this hubbub could be. At the park gates there are the same near shaves and the self-same oaths on the part of colliding coachmen. In the park, on the right, is the same magnificent stretch of turf, a green that is good for the jaded Londoner to view; on the left, the house, where floats the royal standard. Close by the house passes this strange procession, and there on the steps of the entrance sits the owner of all this splendid property, into whose pockets will flow some coin from each individual composing that moving throng which is journeying up that hill, to pay for entrance into the various enclosures. By his side is seen his royal visitor, most popular of England's gentlemen and most popular of English racing men. There stand about, watching the stream of vehicles, various figures, each and all known by name and sight to almost everyone in that vast procession. Royal-ties, dukes, commoners, owners of horses—sportsmen all of them, without whose familiar faces no great race meeting would be deemed complete. Their hacks are being led up and down ready to be ridden across the turf to the race-course, rather a less tedious manner of arrival than that toil up the inevitable hill.

Past the house rolls the coach till *the* corner is

reached. I call it *the* corner at the foot of the hill. We all know this pandemonium. Here there is gathered a collection of horse-flesh impossible to be rivalled in point of variety in any portion of the globe; spare cab horses, broken-down hunters, and superannuated thoroughbreds; horses from every farm in the country, from the steady-going old stager straight from the plough, to the domestic pony who is accustomed to draw the basket-carriage of mi'lady, the farmer's wife.

Imagine some hundred of these all on the move, all with traces dangling as they go, each animal led by its own individual owner, temporary or otherwise; and what individuals are these owners—farm lads, professional rogues, vagabonds, costermongers, cabmen, ragged children, all severally intent upon out-bidding the other for your custom—your custom, or rather that of your coachman, consisting of half a crown for the loan of a horse to act as leader up the hill.

Think of the sudden stopping of this great procession, the vehicles which wish to stop, so that the driver may argue and bargain; the coaches which wish to push on and get past; the cries and eager offers of those who lend the horses; the demands and commands of those who require them; the assurances of the parsimonious cabman, who insists that his own tired horse is equal to the pull alone; the remonstrances of his "fares" inside that cab; the backing of carriages in front and remarks there-

upon of the proprietors of those behind; the kicking of horses and indiscriminate whipping on the part of their drivers; the attempts of the "leader" men to make great show of urging on their half-crown steeds, while in reality sparing them at the expense of the original animal in the shafts; discovery and consequent "language" on the part of the owners of the original animal; all this and a great deal more warrants me in calling it a pandemonium, that corner of Goodwood Park; and as our friends looked down from their position of vantage on the top of the coach and listened, they too thought it was the most chaotic scene any of them had ever beheld.

And then the stampede: that really is some fun to watch, because it is more than dangerous in appearance and yet no accidents have I ever seen accrue therefrom.

As each man reaches the top of the hill with his leader, he unhitches him and prepares to return to pandemonium corner for another job. His first preparation is to climb upon the animal's back, his second to guide him on to the turf at the side of the road, and his third and last—for after this the horse has to do all that remains to be done, his rider handing him over the entire control—is to dig his heels into the sides of his mount, grip hold of the halter rope and endeavour to remain where he is, with every separate muscle of his body.

Like the gentleman in Rotten Row who, on being addressed, begged his companion to defer the con-

versation, because at that moment he was busy riding, these impromptu jockeys are more than busy; they may be described as excessively occupied, for the horse gallops down an almost perpendicular descent, while there thunder after him half a score of others at a similar pace; there is a railing en route—how you long to see one of these animals take it in his course, but no, such old screws are very wary and never once swerve from the little narrow path which leads them through the fence. It is marvelous that they do not come down—to gallop a clever horse at that pace, down that height, would be a risky proceeding—but those old crocks! it is most wonderful. Truly the thought of a possible half crown at the bottom of that hill must be a powerful motor, to make these riders move so fast. As I write I can see them; and the one-legged man we always look out for, there he is, just the same as last year, the year before that, and the year before that one too, his wooden leg at right angles to his horse, the halter rope in his left hand, his steed a great lumbering brute fresh from some neighbouring farm-yard; there he goes, bumpety, bumpety bump. Oh, how shaken he must be.

“How good for his liver,” laughed Gerald.

“How bad for his pants,” chimed another.

“How stiff he’ll be to-morrow,” said a third.

“Yes, in his right knee joint,” added a fourth.

I wonder how many separate remarks have been passed upon this rider of the wooden leg. For years

he has been a feature of the "road" to Goodwood. And here is another feature: nearing the top of the hill, just before the road enters the wood, stands a blind old man, and with him a little girl who wishes you luck, "and may you back the winner, gentlemen." Many sixpences are thrown them as an offering propitiatory to the Fates, by the superstitious among the sportsmen, and hundreds are the shillings and sometimes golden pieces which are chucked across the road if on the return journey these superstitious ones have had a "good day." There are no such recklessly generous people as sporting folk; it's come to-day and gone to-morrow; there have been more good deeds unostentatiously done by what the world sneers at as "gamblers" than perhaps by any other class of people living. But I am not here now to extol their good deeds, only to chronicle that the officers of the — hussar coach did not forget to throw the blind man sixpences "for luck" on this occasion.

What would the beggars do were there no races or race-going men? Wasn't it "Ginger" who took nothing but gold? "Ginger," familiar figure on every English race-course, began in a very small way with a banjo; he is now a great swell, and welcome to take a sumptuous lunch and a glass of champagne at the back of any coach which he may choose to visit.

It was asserted that "Ginger" never took silver, therefore "Ginger" always got gold. He took that—

but if he were given silver, shillings, half crowns, no matter what, he thanked you with a graceful inclination of the head and then tossed your gift to the crowd. There has seldom been a more original plan for fortune making than this. But I have wandered away from the blind beggar and his little girl, his own, or perhaps only hired to heighten effect, and it is just at this point where he takes his stand that people turn round to admire the view; and this view it is almost impossible to surpass. There is something in the irony of fate after all—a blind man selecting the most beautiful view he can find for the plying of his trade, but perhaps in this his trade is upon his knowledge of the hearts of men. If these hearts are within the reach of such calculations, then the greater the flow of sixpences into the hat of the far-seeing old blind man. But I doubt whether many race-goers are influenced by such thoughts as these, or that the recipient of their generosity born of superstition, had any hand whatever in this example of the bitter irony of fate.

For all that, I am sorry he cannot see the view, for it is so pleasant to look across that sloping park, where beyond lie wooded valleys, pasture land and plough—almost, it seems, to the water's edge, the water, which might be a sheet of gold, all dazzling in the sun, and then a dark, black speck, which your neighbour tells you is the Isle of Wight; can you see it ?

“ Well, no,” you answer.

"But I can, quite plain," he says. "Why, there's the steeple of a church, which stands right up most clearly."

You turn for one moment to see how the speaker looks while making that astounding statement, and as he looks convinced and truth is written in his face, you straightway conclude that you yourself are foolish and cannot see aright; then boldly selecting the most likely looking cloud you answer back:

"Ah, yes; the Isle of Wight—of course it is—and yes, I see the steeple. By Jove! its awfully plain to me now!" And you're not romancing either, for doesn't that black streak of cloud resemble a steeple as much as it resembles anything at all? But oh, how fortunate it is for all those whose reputation for veracity is as yet unsullied that on occasions such as these there exists no possibility of *proving* you are wrong.

IN THE RING.

Through the wood which hides the view rolls the coach, and then Laverstone pulls himself together to drive for the gallery. For at the top of the bank, on the far end of the lawn, stand the earlier arrivals, congregated there to watch the coaches as they are driven in through the narrow gate below to be drawn up in line. Very cleverly does "Cliff" perform this feat—which calls forth many remarks upon the workmanlike manner in which he handles his team. And other coaches follow him in quite a

procession—one might almost be witnessing a “meet” at the barracks in Hyde Park, were it not that at the back of the coaches hang numerous large hat boxes, very puzzling appendages to a stranger, who may not be aware that it is “the fashion” for a man to drive over from his quarters in the neighbourhood in the cool comfort of a straw hat, bringing the tall one in which he will presently shine resplendent carefully stowed away in its box. If only on some of those hot days one could leave “the topper” in its box, and chance the resplendent part, while continuing in a straw! No, perish the thought!—I was only joking, of course—for we all know it would spoil the whole show if people were not obliged to conform to the exigencies of fashion, and dress up to the occasion; where would be the “smartness” of the meeting were all the splendour confined to the softer sex! No, never! away with that straw; out with that hat box; retire with it into the cloak room; brush yourself up, and emerge again spicker than span; with boots that could reflect the blue sky above them, glasses over your shoulder, and a button-hole in your coat—much more chance of backing winners now.

Look at Sir Timothy Trueman, he is gorgeous! would you wish one item of that *toilette* altered? I fancy not. Observe Lord Bandbox, one of the show men of his time! His get-up is faultless—curly hat that shines like silver, pink and white cheeks, pink and white tie, dark brown cutaway morning coat, dark brown glasses and straps, pink carnations

in his button-hole, white handkerchief with pink edge peeping from his pocket, light grey trousers, and boots that sparkle in the sun—but, oh, such little, very little boots, that there is barely room for one ray to sparkle upon each. Truly, Lord Bandbox is a person to admire. But so are Sir Timothy and Gerald Drayton, though both in different ways. Lord Bandbox gives one the idea of being perfectly dressed, but it almost makes you sigh to think what trouble and what thought must have preceded that almost unique result. Sir Timothy impresses you with the conviction that he is expensively clothed. You feel that his tailor's bill must be enormous, though almost convinced that it is not altogether Sir Timothy's fault, for the tailor has selected the garments, and assured the young baronet that this particular thing is just what he ought to wear, "quite the stuff for a July day, etc.;" and the easy-going customer has obeyed orders, or, rather, suggestions, with this gorgeous result. Gerald Drayton, too, is well turned out; but, for the life of you, after he is out of sight, you could not recollect what he had on; he merely conveyed the idea that he was exactly right all over, and "smart," without being aggressively so. It is but a short time since this July day of which I speak; yet, though I could give a pretty accurate description—as, indeed, I have done—of the costumes of the first two gentlemen, I could not recollect for one moment the exact appearance of Gerald's clothes.

Gerald himself is not thinking very deeply of his clothes, as he gets off the coach and, entering the enclosure, passes down the little wood at the back of the lawn, where servants are already busy laying cloths and arranging feasts, as though it were to picnic only that all these people were gathering together. At the upper end of the wood all is bustle and confusion. People are arriving fast now; the crowd thickens; the house party, bringing royalty, have just dashed up to the gates and disappeared into the interior of the stand; and after them come other equipages, which induce the crowd to remain and stare; the well-turned-out carriages and postilions from the neighbouring estate of England's premier duke, barouches and breaks containing ladies in dust cloaks, who alight and hurry past to "tidivate" in the cloak-room, while their male escorts loiter about until they reappear, swelling the crowd and blocking up the gangway, in a manner that is rather aggravating to people desirous of going to and fro to the paddock, or penetrating to the innermost recesses of the Ring. It was to the latter place that Gerald was wending his way, nodding to men, bowing to ladies and shouldering past people he didn't know, all with a perseverance that few would exhibit on other occasions, for the purpose of visiting any friend or acquaintance they might possess. But when the goal to be reached is the Ring, the amount of pushing, heat and bad language to which a man will

submit in order to reach it, is something one would scarcely credit.

But Gerald did reach it, and what was more, after some little trouble managed to run against the person of whom he was in search.

"Holloa! Charlie; there you are," he cried, catching sight of Summers and trying to arrest his attention.

"Well done, old chap," replied that individual. "Its awfully good of you to be so punctual. You got my wire, then, of course?"

"Yes, just before we started. You said I was to meet you in the Ring before the first race, and here I am. What is it? Another of your wonderful tips, I suppose; some absolute certainty that can't lose unless he breaks his leg. That's the good thing, isn't it?"

"Well, not exactly," answered Charlie, laughing; "but I have got hold of a soft thing, I can tell you, and have been most anxious to get on at the best price, before the odds shortened, and wanted to put you on, too."

"It's awfully good of you," replied Gerald; "but I am not a plunger, like you. I seldom invest more than a modest fiver on any race, and even then I quake with fear, and think what a fool I am to chuck away money on a game at which I, in reality, know so little, and the people on whom I depend know so much."

"Oh, that's all very well for a fellow to say in a

book, my boy; but this won't be chucking away money. It will be just picking it up."

"Well, Charlie, out with it. What's the tip?"

"It's," whispered Charlie, "Placeman or Despond; one or the other must win."

"Is that all?" said Gerald. "Why, there's nothing very new about that. Placeman has Archer up, and Despond, everyone knows, can win it if he will only try."

"Ah, but I had this straight," replied Charlie, as though that settled it.

"Straight? Yes, some little tout, I suppose, who has told it 'straight' to fifty other fellows, only each time naming a different horse, so that one of the fools must win and pay him a large commission for the tip."

"Oh, well, it's all very easy to be suspicious and to sneer," answered Charlie, slightly aggrieved. "You are one of those fellows who take nothing on trust and disbelieve in the generality of mankind. Well, that's all right as far as it goes, but you'll never do any good racing if you carry that to an excess; you must trust some one, you know; they can't all be villains. Why, I once won a hatfull of money simply through listening to a cabman who volunteered a tip. Your nasty, suspicious mind would have at once concluded that he was trying to take you in."

"Well, old chap, perhaps I am suspicious; but, though I don't bet, lookers on see a great deal of the

game, and I don't think, if I had a nice, trustful nature like yours, I would select the turf as a place for its exhibition."

"Oh, hang it all, Gerald; you'd make me out a regular fool. I fancy if it comes to the point I can see as far through a brick wall as most people. I only treat people as they treat me."

"Well, my boy, don't get riled. I doubt not but that you are as full of wisdom as Solomon himself; but I don't think Solomon was a prophet, and no one but a first-class prophet can select the winner of a big race like this one."

"Well, the *Sporting Times* gave three winners at Newmarket the other day," retorted Charlie.

"Ah, that was a fluke," replied Gerald, not to be done. "'Exceptions prove the rule.' According to the law of chances some prophesies must come true."

"Well, sir, what is it I can do for you," at this moment said Mr. Caliph, a prominent bookmaker. "Want a bet on the big race, Mr. Summers? You can have four hundreds the favourite, if you like."

"No, I don't want to back the favourite," answered Charlie.

"Well, what's your horse?" said Mr. Caliph carelessly, as though it would interest him but slightly to know, "twenty to one any of the outsiders."

"All right; book me twenty to one in hundreds for two horses, outsiders both."

"But their names, Mr. Summers. I can't book any bet till I know the name of the horse."

"Oh, you don't mean business," exclaimed Charlie, pretending to put his book back in his pocket. "You offer a price, and then when I take you, you try to back out of it."

"Not at all, sir, not at all; only, for all I know, your horses may be second favourite and at a much shorter price than twenty to one."

"What is second favourite, then?" asked Charlie.

"Well, there are several of them much fancied," replied the bookmaker, still fencing, "there's at least seven or eight that have been pretty heavily backed."

"Come now," said Charlie, his patience pretty well exhausted, "what will you lay me against Placeman?"

"Ten to one, sir," replied Mr. Caliph, without hesitation.

"I'll take twelves—"

"No, sir, there's been a run on Placeman this morning, and I shouldn't wonder if he saw a very short price when the numbers go up."

"Well, Caliph, I've never got the better of you, and don't suppose I ever shall. I'll take your ten to one."

"How often?" asked Mr. Caliph, imperturbably.

"How often will you lay?"

Mr. Caliph gave the young man one quick glance, as though to discover whether after all he *did* know something, and then, apparently satisfied there was

nothing in the wind, and that he was not stealing a march upon him, merely replied, "Monkeys," and commenced to write.

"Right, monkeys," said Charlie, as though he were speaking of pence.

"My dear boy," whispered Gerald, aghast, "I knew you were a plunger, but never had any idea you planked it down like that; don't be so reckless, old chap, please."

"Oh, I'm all right," answered Charlie, rather testily. "I've got to make some money to-day, and I intend to do it if I can. Now, Mr. Caliph," he continued, "there's another, but I want longer odds against him."

"Horse?" queried the bookmaker.

"Despond," answered the backer.

"Twelves," said Mr. Caliph.

"Twelve monkeys," said Charlie, and they both wrote it down.

"Five to one the favourite, eight to one Placeman, ten to one Despond," roared Mr. Caliph. Charlie's plunge had shortened the odds at once, and given a clue to who was on the horse, as it was pretty well known from whence his information came; his friend Sir Timothy Trueman had put a biggish lump on Placeman over night, and here was Mr. Summers following suit.

"Must be sweet on his chance," argued the fielders; but they had made up their minds that a horse called the Pearl was going to win; in fact couldn't

lose, and sometimes when bookmakers go for a horse they are even more obstinate than the most obstinate of backers; thus Jones, Branch and "Joey" stood to win a heavy stake over the Pearl, and were just laying against almost every other horse in the race. Therefore, scenting Charlie as prey sent by Providence to enable them to square their books, they soon surrounded him with entreaties of "Now, Mr. Summers, what can I do for you, sir?" Charlie was a little excited at the commotion he had caused, and feeling that now was his moment for making that fortune of which he had dreamt, went on booking bets right and left. Timothy had been so sanguine, the horses were both so fit, Placeman was certain to win, the only thing to beat him was Despond, so he "went for" the former and looked to save himself, with something to spare, over the latter. Gerald waited for him till it was all over, looking very sad and very grave. It was no use to argue with Charlie in public; he felt that to do so would only have the effect of driving him into still higher figures, out of a spirit of contradiction, so he waited.

When the Ring was tired of laying, and Charlie had filled quite two pages of his book, he turned to Gerald and said:

"Now, come on, old chap; let's go and do society. I sha'n't bet on any other races, so we've lots of time to lunch and look about us."

"Well," answered his companion with a sigh,

"it's no good saying anything now. Charlie, except to wish you luck; but I declare I feel quite scared at the way you have been going on."

"Oh, that's right enough," laughed Charlie, uneasily; "I'm able to take care of myself; come on. Where's Sinclair? I want to see him awfully. By the by, are you going to stand in a tenner with me on each of my horses—a pony, if you like?"

"No, a tenner will do, thanks," said Gerald. "Just something to feel we are, in a sense, in the same boat. But, old boy, I'd give more than a tenner to see you pull it off."

"Thanks; I know you would," replied Charlie, lightly touching his friend on the shoulder. "Now, then, here goes"; and from that moment until they got to the other end of the lawn, the pair never ceased to take off their hats or nod to every other person they met.

THEY KNOW A GIRL WORTH TWO OF HER.

At the farther end they ran against Sinclair. He was standing there in his quiet way, amusing himself by looking on at the gay scene before him. He did not care one jot for racing as a sport, but he enjoyed a meeting like Goodwood, and seeing all the people he knew gathered together. His face brightened when he saw Charlie.

"Holloa, boy!" he cried, "I'm awfully glad to see you. I have been looking out for you, and commis-

sioned Gerald to bring you to me as soon as he saw you, so as to keep you out of mischief."

"You're as good as a nurse to me, old chap. I won't get into any mischief. Look at the brim of my hat, all ruffled and bent already from my efforts in the society way."

"Well, but how about your meeting with Gerald in the Ring ? Isn't that mischief?"

"Yes, by Jove! it was," broke in Gerald; "the devil's own mischief. I'm going to sneak, you see, Charlie. You won't mind me, but I know you are afraid of Cecil."

"Oh, well, I may as well tell you fellows all about it," answered Charlie. "The case is this: You know how wild I have been over that pretty Lady Dosia Trellis all this summer ? Well, we understood each other, and I went to see old Shargoyle, her father, the other day, and the mercenary old chap said it would be no use thinking of it unless I could show him at least twenty thousand down. Well, I haven't got twenty thousand, nor half of it, so I'm just going to make it, and then I'll go and see the grasping old boy with the money-bags in my hand and demand the daughter."

The others looked aghast at this reckless speech.

"You can't be serious," said Cecil, gravely.

"Why not ?" answered Charlie, rather less lightly, for something in his friend's face showed him he perhaps wasn't doing quite the correct thing after all.

"Because if you are," continued Cecil, "you are a

fool, and a reckless fool. How can you expect to win just because you want to ? and the chances are that even if you do, it would get about that you won the money racing, and Lord Shargoyle would be quite justified in withdrawing his word after all."

"Oh, he won't do that," said Charlie, confidently. "All I've got to do is to win. I'll chance the rest."

"And Lady Dosia ?" queried Gerald. "What does she think of this plan ?"

"Think ! Why, it was her idea."

"Her idea !"

"Yes; you know the owner of Placeman is rather spoons on her, and she set to work to pump him about the stable, and then wired to me that these were the two horses that should carry our fate."

"Well, she—" began Gerald, and then he stopped.

"Well, what ?"

"Well, she has an eye to the main chance, your young lady," he substituted for the less complimentary remark that he had had upon his lips.

"Of course she has," smiled Charlie. "Isn't the main chance a stepping-stone to felicity with me ?"

"And if you don't win," said Cecil, gravely, "what will she do then—throw you over ?"

"Well, I suppose we shall have to give each other up," replied Charlie, softening over the harder expression.

"And you ; she won't much care of what becomes of you."

"Oh, I shall be all right. I shall go right away somewhere — Mexico, Australia, anywhere — and start and work. I'm not likely to make a fuss about it, either. This is neck or nothing for me; and if I am stranded with the nothing, I shall just take it as quietly as I can."

"Well, if you are stranded with the nothing, Charlie, I don't think you will be altogether an object of pity," replied Cecil, drily, following Charlie's eyes to where they were looking at a little figure seated upon one of the benches some yards off. A pretty girl, very, with a lovely face, but the *beauté du diable*; there was rather a cruel look around her mouth and, perhaps, a false ring in the laugh which came forth readily enough as she chatted gaily with the numerous men who surrounded her. At that moment, catching sight of Charlie, she beckoned him imperiously with her parasol, and without further delay he betook himself to the side of his charmer."

"Well, of all the cold - blooded, diabolical things I ever heard of," began Cecil, as soon as he had left them. "That girl would think no more of sacrificing that boy than she would of crushing a fly. He, to a certain extent, suits her. If he can get the money she'll take him, if he ruins himself in the attempt—well, he must go, and she will then set about finding some one else."

"Yes, by Jove! she *must* be a beauty," replied

Gerald, reflectively; "but she's devilish pretty, all the same," giving another look in her direction.

"Handsome is as handsome does," quoted Cecil. "I know a pretty girl who could give her points and a beating, and who has a heart as true as steel besides."

"So do I," said Gerald. Whereat they both laughed.

"Well, Cecil," presently said his friend, following up this train of thought, "apropos of that, how does your course of love flow on? Is there any chance of papa Courtown relenting?"

"None whatever, I fear," answered Cecil. When he heard of Florence's engagement, he was perfectly wild—in fact, laughed at the idea of any engagement at all—declared I had acted in an underhand way, speaking to his daughter before I had communicated with him; as if I could communicate with a chap on the other side of the water; and, in a word, kicked up about as much row as it was possible to do."

"Well, and Florence?" asked Gerald.

"Oh, she, dear little girl, stands up as pluckily as anything; but she is all alone, poor child; and it is hard for any girl to hold out against the united disapproval of her family. Of course, it's only natural they should think she might have done better. But there it is; I love her and she loves me; it seems hard if mercenary motives should wreck two whole lives. Does no one marry for love nowadays, I wonder!"

"Very few, I fancy," smiled Gerald; "except, perhaps, in America," he continued. "Out there they swagger awfully that they are not as other men are, and all their matches are matches of love."

"Yes, so it seems," said Cecil. "Papa Courtown is a case in point—dried up old fossil—looking upon his daughters as so much value in hard cash, to be received hereafter from the highest bidder."

"Well, it's no use abusing him, Cecil; he only acts according to his lights, I suppose; and, after all, he has more pluck than most people, for, being utterly selfish, he does not fear to show it openly, where other people, whose ideas are equally concentrated upon self, pretend all the time to be actuated by no motives other than the most praiseworthy. But," he went on, "we're both pretty much in the same boat. You are poor, and have ventured to fall in love with Florence; and, as you may perhaps have observed, I love Constance, her sister—love her as truly as any man could love a woman. I worship the very ground she treads on, and yet I have never spoken to her of this. What is the use? She likes me, I think, but—there is a but in the matter—I, too, am poor—at least, as an American reckons poverty; and though I love her, as I told you, yet am I not blind to her faults? I sometimes believe if she were perfect I should not love her so much; and one fault is that she, like her father, worships

money. To her, to be poor is the summit of unhappiness. 'I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not money more,' I heard her parody one day apropos of a girl who had thrown over the man to whom she was engaged, for some bloated millionaire, and I often think she may have meant it."

"Well, I confess yours is a pretty bad case, almost as bad as mine," commented Cecil, "but then you see you haven't spoken yet; time works wonders. Go to America and renew the siege, or better still, stop at home and get over it."

"I can't get over it, nor can I rest till I have learnt my fate. I keep telling myself, faint heart never won fair lady, and try to bolster up my pluck to go in and win, but I know I should only be riding for a fall even if I do start."

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
To win or lose his all."

quoted Cecil. "Look at our young friend Charlie: though what he is doing is the act of a madman, yet I cannot help admiring the pluck of the boy; he is going to win or lose *his* all, before the day is much older, too, and there he is smiling away as though he hadn't any anxiety on his mind greater than deciding where he shall lunch. By Jove! I don't know what to hope for him though; if he pulls

off this long shot he will probably marry his Lady Dosia and awaken after a very brief space of time to find his swan an extremely commonplace goose—if he loses—well, he will have to get out of this for a bit, and if he has any real grit in him, which I think he has, he will start life anew, and the effort of so doing will bring out the best in his nature and make a man of him; but come on, old chap, we two mustn't stand yarning away here about our respective love affairs; we've come here to enjoy ourselves. I verily believe there go the numbers for the second race, and neither of us even looked on at the first one—nice sportsmen we are!" So saying they entered the crowd and strolled down the lawn.

LUNCH.

Meanwhile people were making great preparations for luncheon. It was no easy matter to find the particular table, or rather cloth, to which one had been bidden. There was the regimental lunch from Brighton, the naval lunch from Portsmouth, the "spread" of an Indian Mahrajah, who was dispensing good things to his guides, sponsors and friends; good things, in which his own religion forbade him share. There was the profuse hospitality of a magnate of the Press, and the less imposing meals belonging to the owners of the neighbouring country-houses and the tenants of cottages taken for "the week."

The green grass was almost completely hidden with table-cloths; it seemed a very nightmare of a picnic.

"Food, food everywhere, but where am I to eat?" cried Charlie Summers, threading his way daintily about, avoiding putting his foot upon a bottle of champagne, cleverly missing a lobster salad which lay right in his path, but only to step bang upon a bunch of grapes which had lurked quietly upon the other side of the dish. No one, however, had time to notice this mishap, and, feeling like a criminal, his varnished boots too, all covered with juice, he continued on his way, alternately stopping to apologise when he gave anyone a more than usually severe push, or prancing high in the air to save various edibles from sharing a fate similar to "those confounded grapes."

At length he reached the desired goal and was soon squatting Indian fashion, balancing a plate of game pie upon his uncomfortably bent knees, while above him upon an inverted champagne hamper sat, looking down, Lady Dosia Trellis, the girl whom he adored with all the first passion of his boyish heart.

"Well, Charlie," said that young lady, "the money on?"

"Yes," replied he, looking upwards, his mouth full of pie and his eyes full of love, "yes, it's all right; either of the two horses will make everything ship-shape. You *do* hope they will win, don't you," he added wistfully in a low voice.

"How can I hope they will win, both of them,

you silly boy," laughed the beauty; "but of course I want you to pull it off, or else I shouldn't have taken all the trouble to make you plunge, as I hear you did."

"I'm so glad you are anxious, dear," continued Charlie, tenderly.

She scarcely looked a prey to anxiety as she sat sipping her champagne, looking all round her over the brim of her glass as she did so; more sure index of a thirst for admiration than the fact of drinking the contents of the glass is indication of thirst of a more legitimate kind.

"But they *might* both win, you know," he added, silyly; "there is such a thing as a dead-heat, you know."

"Nonsense," replied her ladyship; "I never believe in a dead-heat; the odds against it are simply enormous."

"Well, lay the odds, will you?" said Charlie, helping himself to more pie. "Lay me something to nothing."

"All right," laughed the girl; "I think I can afford that; if Placeman and Despond run a dead-heat I'll make you a present."

"I'll hold you to that," he said eagerly; "and the present—may I claim it before to-morrow morning?"

"Oh, yes, if you like," she replied; "there are such lots of shops on a race-course it will be so easy for me to buy you something before dinner-time."

"No, I don't want you to *buy* me anything,

Dosia," said the young man; "it isn't that sort of present that I want; the place you are staying at is only five miles from where our party are, and if there is a dead-heat I'll come over after dinner and claim the present I shall have won."

"All right; make any arrangement you like, Charlie; one would think you knew there was going to be a dead-heat, by the way you talk; but look, there go the numbers, you'd better go to the paddock and pick up the latest scraps of information."

Meanwhile Cecil was making a hearty meal at the — hussar lunch not far off. How hospitable soldiers are on these festive occasions. I often think the people they entertain are not half grateful enough for these opportune meals. They are not millionaires, the majority of our young officers. Mahrajahs and dukes do not feel their pockets any the lighter for the expense which such entertaining entails, but when a regiment welcome their friends, that frequent popping of the champagne corks must make a hole in a great many pockets not too heavily burdened with coin. Personally, I never lunch with "the soldiers" without feeling inclined to get up and say an appropriate grace when, well filled and refreshed, I arise to surrender my seat to another hungry wanderer who in his turn is called upon to rejoice.

Gerald was with the naval brigade. This lunch was certainly the most picturesque of the lot; it beat the Mahrajah's, although that personage was the happy possessor of a henchman attired in

yellow. The blue-jackets, in their Sunday rig of white ducks, straw hats and black ribbons, stood all round, dispensing the hospitality of their officers; cheery faces were on every side. No people enjoy life like naval officers; and these particular ones, fresh from some foreign port, were here to enjoy another Goodwood. For the most part they were men not yet used up by over attention to society's calls; they did not, either, spoil their day's outing by investments on the races higher than they could with comfort afford to lose. Moreover, they were not blasés, all was fun that came to their net; and what fun to be once again in England for the Goodwood race week, an event they had so often talked over, wondering whether they should fetch home in time for it, when the distance between them and English festivities seemed almost too great to admit of such a possibility. Gerald was having a really good time; he had many naval pals, and the hearty good-fellowship of that lunch contrasted to him very greatly with the rather forced "chaff" and eternal race talk of the majority of the people he had met that morning.

THE RACE.

The bell was ringing now; the horses were being galloped past; half-finished lunches were left to wait; and everyone moved to some point of vantage where they could get a good view of the race. Gerald and

Cecil, both greatly interested on Charlie's account, had agreed to watch the race together. They were presently joined by that individual himself. There were no traces of nervousness in his manner as he laughed gaily and said:

"I spotted you two in this corner, and knowing you were both fellows who were never contented unless in the best place, I thought I would join you."

The fact was that Charlie, after much thought, had given up the idea of watching the race with Lady Dosia. He told himself it would never do. "I might let my excitement get the better of me, or something, and I must at any rate look cool, whichever way things turn out."

So he sought the companionship of those two friends who knew all about his affairs. It would be better than being all alone. There is a silent sympathy which is very helpful to a man when in trouble or anxiety of any kind; and the belief that the person with you enters into your hopes and fears in a moderate degree, is oftentimes of great service in producing that exterior of calm which all Englishmen pride themselves on displaying in moments of trial.

"Come on, old chap," said Gerald; "stay by us and we will bring you luck."

Each of the three stood, as, indeed, did some thousands in that vast crowd, his eyes glued to his glasses, and those glasses directed towards the

starting-post. It was tedious waiting for the many who stood there, watching with beating hearts, their gaze fixed upon some particular horse, some red or green jacket, whose every movement was observed with anxiety.

"Off they go!"

"Ah!" sighs some poor wretch, "there's my horse left at the post."

"Hooray!" cries another; "got a good start, at any-rate."

"False start," shouts a voice, and both hope and fear are dashed to the ground; the anxiety begins anew.

At length, after sundry false starts and an interval of at least twenty minutes, during which the less enthusiastic sportsmen begin to reflect that they might have finished their lunch after all, there is a roar of "they're off." Those two words, "they're off," are magical in their effects. Many a heart has almost ceased to beat as that sound was heard; many an eye gets blurred just when a clear sight is most eagerly desired; and the colour will rush to or fade from many a hundred cheeks as that patient, watching crowd stand expectant, waiting to know their fate.

Where is the man who has ever made a bet and cannot even now recollect with what feelings he awaited the result? By a bet, I of course mean a sum which to him represents a great deal. I do not speak of rich people—poor rich people—they lose

much, and unless the horse perhaps belongs to them their sensations do not vary. *Their* hearts can never beat faster, nor *their* heads swim with excitement, while the lips smile calm and the voice comes forth, to others clear and steady—to the speaker a sound he scarcely recognises as his own, while marvelling all the time how this thing is done. What man is there who, having made a bet such as I now describe, has not himself been through all this, and able even at this distance of time to feel that dread, sick sinking which was once experienced when the crowd roared loud, “they’re off.” And now, to look at our friend Charlie you would never believe that he had more than a passing interest in the race, an interest he wished would indeed pass that he might continue his luncheon. Yet, probably, had you mentioned the word food his stomach would have sickened at the thought, for there, within him, was a something, he knew not what—sinking, sinking, drawing the life from out his frame, as though in very truth his heart were capable of descending to his boots.

“They’re off.” On they come, in close order at first, and then two or three draw to the front.

“Antler is beat!” “It’s all up with Mascotte!” “Despond’s chucked it!” “Placeman wins!” were the cries which rose on all sides.

Preserve me from hearing the horse I have backed being proclaimed the winner by that asinine voice in the crowd almost as soon as the race has begun.

Do what I will, I cannot help hope telling a flattering tale, although I know that in bitter reality that fool has proved to me that my fancy cannot win. However, in this instance, Placeman certainly held his own gamely enough, and Despond had not chucked it by any manner of means. As they swept past the lawn these two were leading.

"By Jove! I must win now," said Charlie, who, notwithstanding the calm of his voice, was by this time pale as death. "Nothing can catch them; one must win."

"I think you're all right, boy," said Gerald; "nothing can come up now."

Neck and neck raced the two. "Placeman wins!" "Despond!" "Placeman!" "Placeman!" "Placeman!" was shouted on every side. Then "Dragon!" "Dragon wins!" rent the air; and at this moment an outsider, running rather wide, dashed to the front, caught the two leaders, and all three locked together they passed the post.

"By Jove! what was that—has he won?" asked everybody.

Charlie merely said, "That was a near shave, but I fancy I just landed it," and he turned round to put his glasses in their case. "What's the number going to be, Placeman or Despond, I wonder;" and as he spoke the poor lad strove, with that pluck which was his second-nature, to hide the awful anxiety he was then feeling. In after years, when describing

that moment, he used to declare that he had felt as though in a dream and that he was some one else.

"Seventeen has won!" "Dragon's won!" roared the Ring, tossing their hats into the air and giving vent to those demonstrations of joy which is their wont when an unbacked outsider upsets the calculations of the prophets. True, their own fancy, the Pearl, was nowhere; but so also were those others against which they had laid so heavily.

Fourteen and five dead-heat for second place. The extreme tension of anticipation was over, the numbers were on the board, and a murmur of voices once more filled the air as the horses returned to weigh in.

"Well, I'm dished!" laughed Charlie, with an unnatural laugh, but they ran a dead-heat, my two; I had a presentiment they would; I wonder how that beast got through his horses? talk of the cup being dashed from one's lips, ha, ha! that animal pretty well capsized my little tea-cup. Come on, you fellows, no use bothering about it, let's go and have a drink to our next merry meeting on a race-course."

"Charlie, old chap," began Gerald, "I'm so sorry."

"Oh, don't talk about it," he cried. "I know you're sorry, both of you; I was a fool, and Fate has treated me according to my folly. Cheer up, Cecil, 'pon my word, one would think you had lost instead

of me," continued Charlie, with a faint attempt at chaff; "why, you are as solemn as a judge."

"I don't *feel* as cheerful as you *look*, certainly," answered Sinclair; "but come, one question, Charlie, have you any plans?"

"Yes," he replied, readily enough, pouring out a bumper of champagne, "I'm off to America next week."

"America! why, I have half a mind to go with you," said Gerald; "but why America?"

"Oh, cruise round for a bit, and then go West and stay with a pal who is ranching there; better come too, Gerald."

"Well, perhaps I will," was the somewhat unexpected answer."

"By Jove," suddenly broke in Cecil, "you two sha'n't go alone, I will go with you. We will all three go to America next week."

"*You*," exclaimed Gerald. "Why, you may have to chuck the service; and you are devoted to your profession."

"Yes, but more devoted to some one else on the 'other side,'" added the guardsman.

"Hooray!" cried Charlie, "that will be ripping. Here's *bon voyage*. Let's drink to our trip across the pond, as the Yankees call it." And so saying, he drained his glass, as though in the endeavour to reach through his bodily thirst that mental fever which rendered his whole frame dry with consuming fire.

Thus it is an ill wind which blows no one any good. Charlie lost a fortune and a wife. The results were that he had to go abroad to earn his own living, and start life afresh. His determination brought about a crisis in the affairs of Cecil Sinclair and Gerald Drayton—both of whom straightway resolved to bear him company, a thing half an hour ago neither of them would have contemplated for one moment. Thus, while Lady Dosia Trellis lost a lover, Florence and Constance Courtown, many hundreds of miles away, through her, whom they knew not, each regained the presence of the man she loved best on earth. And they kept their word. That impromptu arrangement held good. For weeks Cecil, who was devoted to his profession, had wavered. Soldiering was to him a passion; he had studied it in a manner not often met with in men of his position, and had even written a book on drill, which had been exceedingly well reviewed by experts. His soul was in his work; but what was the use of that, if his heart were somewhere else. To get leave to go to America in the present state of affairs was quite impossible; the only alternative, as Gerald phrased it, was to chuck the service. Should the present cloud eventuate in war, he knew that an officer of his experience would have no difficulty in being reinstated in some position or another; but yet this alternative was a wrench indeed; though think how his self-inflicted wound would heal could his fondest hopes come true! And thus

he indeed put it to the touch—to win, or lose his all.

DROPPED OUT OF THE RUNNING.

For the rest of the afternoon Charlie avoided Lady Dosia. He could not face her in a crowd; though he found little difficulty in preserving a smile of happiness when not in her company. To have met her would have been fatal to his unspoken resolve to die game. Therefore, to all others there seemed nothing wrong with Charlie, except, perhaps, he was more cheery, if possible, than usual; but then, so many fellows are more cheery after lunch than they are before.

Other races came and went; other people bet and won, or more probably bet and lost. Other hearts beat faster at the words, "false start," and other faces blanched at the roar, "they're off;" but all this was over for Charlie—he had dropped out of the running. Such unnatural excitement he had drained to the dregs, and already he could almost wonder to think that so very lately he had been the prey to such violent emotions. Thus the day wore on, thus the world wags on. People drop out of the running, but there are others to take their place. As you have suffered, so will he. The pace which was too fast for you will number him also among the vanquished. As each one disappears, another fills the gap. Have you ever met those who have disappeared?

Have you ever travelled "up country" in Australia? Have you ever visited New Zealand or the Cape? Have you ever been "out West"? The man the least inclined to moralise would pause to think, could he hear the tales these far-off places might unfold, or could he even see those people I myself have met; and others follow in their steps. "Alas, regardless of their doom, the little victims play."

Our little victim, in the shape of Charlie Summers, though ungiven to moralise, could scarcely refrain from some such unformed thoughts as these; but he kept his head; he had no other bets that day; he had shot his bolt; what he had lost he could pay. To "plunge" in the hopes of getting it back, never occurred to him for one moment. He possessed that rare knowledge, and the still more rare grace to prove that knowledge, the grace to own when he was beaten. What harm in going down before a stronger than yourself? Some one must win; therefore all honour to the man who can come up smiling and acknowledge that he has been beaten on his merits. It is often the fashion to belaud the pluck of a person who will never say die and never own that he has been whipped. I have seen men lose game after game, of any game you please, and yet rechallenge their adversary, determined to defeat him in the end. Is that pluck? I think not. It appears to me to more nearly resemble unpleasant obstinacy and discourteous want of *savoir-faire*. Why should you be so determined your adversary

should acknowledge you as the better man, when you yourself refuse to do as much by him? There is a time for everything—even a time for throwing up the sponge, before it becomes too late to do so with befitting grace. There is greater moral pluck in so doing than the misnamed pluck which is but pig-headed obstinacy in disguise. And thus Charlie had fought with the Ring, and, unlike most others, he threw up the sponge and acknowledged himself beaten.

This day at Goodwood drew to a close, like all other of these days have done. The last race was over, the procession re-formed—the various vehicles sorted themselves—some went to West Drayton, others to Chichester, and others directed their way to the different houses within a radius of twenty miles. Gerald and Cecil were tooled down to Chichester on the — hussar coach, and returned to Preston Barracks to finish up the day with a big night at Mess. Charlie Summers joined his party and accompanied them to Marston Hall, where the hospitable owner had assembled a large gathering of his friends.

LADY DOSIA'S FAREWELL.

That evening, after dinner, many were the inquiries for Mr. Summers. That bright face was easily missed, and his absence formed a gap it was difficult to refill. It was supposed he had gone to bed,

over-tired with the fatigues of the day. But at this moment, in fact, Charlie was on the back of a horse galloping towards the cottage which sheltered the girl whose hand he had tried so hard to win. That afternoon he had felt unequal to a farewell interview, when he would be called upon to renounce all claim upon the promise he had obtained from her. It was now his duty to set her free, to give back that promise: to have done this before the eyes of the world upon the crowded race-course, was a task beyond his power, but now he had the excuse of coming to ask for his present, on account of the dead-heat which had cost him so dear; what mockery, to claim a kiss and renounce her who bestows that kiss.

Perhaps the scene, the surroundings and sweet tranquility of this beautiful night, may enter into her heart, and by its subtle influence persuade her to refuse the freedom which he brings, while with true nobility of soul she will insist upon sharing the fate of her "cheery boy," as she has been wont to call him, and beg to wait for him even as Leah waited for Jacob.

Some such thoughts as these may be passing through Charlie's mind as he rides along in the silent night. No doubt of her being there to receive him ever enters his head. Dosia was a girl of her word, afraid of no one on earth except, perhaps, her pompous old father; no difficulties would prevent her slipping away from the drawing-room and meeting him as she had promised. But doubts as to her

constancy certainly *do* enter his head. Love is not always blind, though there is a popular fallacy to that effect. To my mind the flaws in one's idol stand out in bolder relief than those of anyone else in the world. You set up a golden calf and worship it, but during that worship you note the faintest index which goes to show that what you adore is removed from a perfect thing. By each flaw I believe your love is strengthened. A perfect thing is too far above us. *We*, miserable failures ourselves, cannot be expected to feel *en accord* with what is altogether without fault, but each newly discovered imperfection in our idol's character is a fresh bond of union between us. Like can enter into the feelings of like; there can be no sympathy where there is glaring dissimilarity. Therefore Charlie was not blind to the fact that he had very little chance of retaining the affections, or rather the constancy, of his Dosia. He could see things from her point of view, and saw how beset with difficulties her path would be; and never once did it enter his head that he should plead his cause with her, though down deep in his heart he could not resist the lurking of a hope—a very faint one, it is true—that at the last moment love for him might outbalance all else, and his little girl would herself suggest that they should sink or swim together. Hope, however dim, is a useful commodity; and this tiny speck of it enabled Charlie to have a comparatively pleasant ride. It allowed him to observe that the stars were shining

bright, the air balmy and cool, after the heated atmosphere of the dining-room he had just quitted, while the turf was soft and springy beneath the feet of his horse, which went freely and well, as horses often do at night.

On his return journey that spark of hope had fled: for all he knew to the contrary it might have been a winter's eve; the stars they shone in vain; while the turf might have been as hard as the veriest macadam, and his game little horse one of those old crocks that he had seen galloping down the Goodwood hill—for all he knew, for all he cared.

When Charlie reached the house he dismounted and hitched his horse to a tree; then he wandered on towards a magnificent oak that stood in deep shadow some hundred yards from the house and waited. It was not long before a light figure came slowly and deliberately along the gravel path which led from the house towards the entrance to the park-like grounds.

"Well, Charlie," began Lady Dosia, quietly and composedly, "you see I have kept my word; you have come for your present, I suppose, and so I have pretended to go to bed, and come out here at the risk of shocking every one most tremendously, to give it to you. Here you are," she continued, taking a little scarf-pin from her dress and offering it to him.

"Is that all you have to say, Dosia?" asked the young man, not heeding the outstretched hand.

"Dosia, do you really think I came all this way for

that kind of present? Then, with reproach in his voice, "Have you nothing else to give me, nothing to say to me?"

"Why, what could I give you else?" replied the young lady, in cool tones of affected surprise, "and what on earth have I got to say to you?—I forget. Was there anything you wanted me to find out for you?"

"Dosia!" he cried, passionately, "you will drive me wild. You know how I have loved you—you know how I have worshipped you, adored you, and never for one moment let you out of my thoughts! I imagined you returned my love; we were to have been married, even, and this afternoon I risked my all—more than my all, my reputation almost—for your sake! I come to you for comfort—for some words of sympathy—a present which I interpreted as being understood to be one kind kiss, and," with an inflection of infinite contempt, "you offer me a stone, a precious stone, 'tis true," he added, with a forced laugh, "but still it is a stone. Take back your precious stone, Dosia; it looks well sparkling over your heart, which is apparently shaped from the same material!"

"Thanks for calling my heart a precious stone, Charlie, that's the first decently civil thing you have said; but, really, you are so fearfully melodramatic you quite take my breath away; I declare, I feel quite tired; can I sit there?" pointing to a great root which formed a tolerable seat. "Yes, it's dry

enough;" and so saying the imperturbable beauty slowly seated herself thereon. "What was I saying? Oh, yes, you are so horribly in earnest. I didn't know you were going to rake up old stories, or I wouldn't have let you come."

"Rake up old stories?" said Charlie.

"Yes, our engagement and that sort of nonsense; that's an old story, everything is old that is over," she added with a little laugh. "We can't marry, so what's the use of talking about it. I hate unpleasant subjects," continued she in a sort of fretful way, "and it's awfully unkind of you to come here and go on like this." By this time Lady Dosia seemed actually to have worked herself into the belief that she was in reality a much ill-used person. "And as to the present, if you don't want the pin, well, don't take it, and as to the kiss—well," with a little pout, "if your heart *is* set upon playing at being in the servants' hall, well, here you are, and get it over." So saying she withdrew her eyes from the ground and turned that lovely face towards Charlie, who was now seated by her side. He despised himself for it, his pride rose against him, but there are some things stronger than one's self, and the poor lad bent forward and gently kissed those cold, passionless lips. Their touch, though, seemed to pull him together far more than any words could have done; for that kiss was as though he had kissed an icicle, it froze the love within him; and as that consuming fire began to quench, his pride and manhood were rendered

back. Cold water dashed upon a flame may put it out; thus an ice-cold kiss may also extinguish love.

"Well, now I am out of your debt, at any rate," continued this matter-of-fact young lady; "anything else I can do?"

"Yes," answered Charlie, with compressed lips; "make some comment upon this afternoon's occurrences, when the devil prompted me to ruin myself for an idea."

"Well, Charlie, you certainly are rather amusing this evening," laughed his companion. "I believe your losses have upset your brain. You ask me to talk about what you did this afternoon, and begin by saying the devil prompted you. Very polite, I am sure, seeing that in this case his satanic majesty was represented by me, for the plan, I fancy, originated in this fertile spot," putting her finger to her forehead; "and if you only did it for an idea, again that was myself, for if you had won, I was your idea of happiness, *n'est ce pas?* But I hope you'll have sufficient grace to soften the expression by the use of the adjective good, and call me a devil—ish good idea," and the young lady laughed at her own words, but Charlie sat grim and silent, glaring at her with never a smile in response to hers. Suddenly her voice changed.

"Charlie," she said, and at that word, so differently spoken from the rest of the conversation, the boy looked up and saw her gaze fall upon him, as she

had not looked before. "Charlie," she said again, "you're a fool."

"I suppose I am," he answered sadly. "I shouldn't have believed in you, if I weren't."

"Nonsense! don't talk like that. You believed in me because you couldn't help it, and you loved me because I made you. If things had gone right with us, we'd have married and settled down to a steady-going couple, but love in a cottage would scarcely suit either of us."

"I'd work," ventured Charlie.

"Stuff! A lot of money you'd make at it! but, my dear boy," she went on, in a softer voice, and taking his hand in hers as though he had indeed been a child, "you wanted me very much and I wanted you very much; there was one way of managing the matter, not a very good way, perhaps, as the world values these things, but still good enough for our purpose. You have pluck—yes, any amount of it," gazing fondly and proudly into his eyes, "and, as I knew you would, you agreed to my plan; and it would have come off," she went on, her voice one moment vibrating with passion, "if that brute hadn't been bottled up for this coup. I know the owner"—and here her eyes glistened; could this be the self-contained, passionless woman who gave that ice-cold kiss?—"he shall pay for it; he once made love to me, dared to tell me he would never run for a big race without telling me everything, and this is how he keeps his word. I'll be

revenged, Charlie dear; that man shall rue the day he saw me."

"As I do," smiled her companion sadly.

"Yes, poor boy, perhaps you do. Well, our plan did not come off. We are not babies, we are people of the world, you and I. Do you suppose any one this afternoon knew that there was anything amiss with either of us? I rather fancy not"—and she gave a little hard laugh—"and when you came this evening, I didn't want *you* to know what I felt, either. I wanted to avoid a scene and send you away hating me, as you ought to do; you have got to forget me, and the more I make you hate and despise me, the easier will it be for you to bear. Charlie, I have loved you, as you know, and it was for your sake I wished you to go away hating and despising me, but you yourself have rendered it impossible. Silly boy, you have spoilt the plan which I deemed best; you looked so miserable, I found my task harder than I could perform. You wouldn't take the hint, you wouldn't go, and you wanted me to soothe and comfort you, like the great big baby that you are. There, don't sulk any more, little boy, give me a kiss, and then we must part; we've both made a false start. I don't suppose I shall ever find any one I shall love as I have loved you, and I dare say it will be some time before you let any one else occupy my place in your heart; but the course of true love never did run smooth, Charlie"—she was sobbing now—"and it wasn't to be

expected that you and I were to have better luck than others."

They were both standing, Charlie with his arm round her waist, her head buried on his shoulder.

"Dearest little girl," he said, in a broken voice, "hard as it is for both of us, a thousand times rather would I part like this than as you would have had it be. Little darling, I was cross and cruel, for I did not understand the unselfishness of your nature. My own, our dream is past, but often shall I dream of you again. We must part; I see it now, I dare not ask you to wait for me, it would not be manly, it would not be wise."

"No, Charlie, 'a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together;' let us get it over, and, now we are together, help one another to dispel this dream; no use to wait; 'hope deferred maketh the heart sick.' Go abroad, dear boy, and make a name for yourself, or better still, marry some rich girl, who will be lucky if she can exchange her money-bags for your own sweet self; and *I*," she continued, with cutting contempt, "*I* shall marry some dottled old Peer and present my compliments to you and your wife when I ask you to dinner. *Will* you dine with me, Charlie?" smiling up at him through her tears.

"That depends upon your cook," he smiled back, with a ghastly attempt at mirth; then relapsing into melancholy once more, he bent forward and kissed those lips, no longer cold, lips that returned his caress in one long, lingering touch, and then he turned,

without once looking at her again—poor lad, he was ashamed of those manly tears which marred his handsome face—and mounting his horse he disappeared at a hand gallop into the darkness. And *she* whom he had left—after one long, yearning gaze at his departing figure that pent up fountain gave way, and Lady Dosia reseated herself on the old oak root and gave vent to a perfect paroxysm of grief.

“Charlie,” she cried, “come back to me! come back to me! Darling, take me with you. Oh, I cannot, will not, live without you—my boy, my boy—my noble boy!”

But the kindly night concealed those wild words in its friendly gloom, and the mocking silence swallowed up their sound. After a while she grew calmer, and then, with one long-drawn sigh, she said aloud: “It’s over—yes, it’s all over now. *That* was love; everything else will be a sham. Heigho! such is life.”

And then drawing out of her pocket a flask of eau de cologne, she proceeded to deliberately bathe her eyes and carefully erase all traces of tears. A few moments later she entered the drawing-room, declaring, with a laugh, that she had got the better of her headache, and, feeling inclined for more society, had come to rejoin the others.

For the rest of that evening, few people in all that gay company were more bright and cheerful than the beautiful Lady Dosia Trellis.

Yes, heigho, such is life! How little we know of what goes on behind the scenes!

CHAPTER XX.

A TEA-PARTY IN FIFTH AVENUE.

A tea-party was raging in Fifth Avenue. During the season of New York it is very seldom that an entertainment of this kind is not raging at one or another of these spacious mansions in that aristocratic thoroughfare. Carriages were rumbling over its uneven pavement, and one by one depositing their inmates upon "the stoop" of Mrs. Macfarlane's house. Mrs. Macfarlane was not a swell; she was far removed from that inner circle of first families, admittance into which is the *summum bonum* of a New Yorker's ambition. Why then did people flock to Mrs. Macfarlane's house? Surely, it was not for the sake of obtaining tea, for that luxury could have been procured at numerous other houses on this selfsame afternoon, for there is no lack of this kind of entertainment in America. It is cheap and it is easy. Civility is returned without fuss, and hospitality repaid at a very trifling expense.

The reason of the ready response to Mrs. Macfarlane's invitations was, I believe, owing to the fact that she had just returned from Europe. Before Mrs. Macfarlane left on this now historical trip, she had been "a rich widow," and nothing more. Now

she was not only a rich widow, but an object of curiosity. No one is a prophet in his own country, and therefore till a person travels he is totally unable to discover his or her real value in this world of ours.

Mrs. Macfarlane took to travel, and awoke one morning to discover that she was very valuable. In Paris she had been much admired. In London the Prince had asked to be introduced to her, and in five minutes from that memorable event she found herself launched into the very cream of London society. At first she discovered, that this sudden ascent to the top of the tree was not altogether a bed of roses, or rather, to preserve our metaphor, Mrs. Macfarlane found that she had chanced upon a *crème renversée*; *renversée* on account of jealousy of her, a new arrival, a fresh aspirant to fame; but the apple-cart, or rather the cream jug, was only upset in the shape of the women. Men-kind set to work to adore her in such frantic haste, that the object of their adoration soon found that she had little else to do but sit still and receive this homage. But the women, they held aloof, as people with disjointed noses are occasionally very apt to do. Therefore Mrs. Macfarlane, who was "pretty cute," to use her own pithy expression, determined that she would not sit still in this case, but on the contrary go in and win. Few things on which she set her heart turned out other than successful; therefore, by dint of a little trouble and a great deal of

savoir-faire, Mrs. Macfarlane not only went in, but she won.

A little judicious observation goes a long way, and by being careful never to be a party to any man's desertion of the person to whom he lawfully or, perhaps, tacitly belonged, she managed to make more friends than enemies; and when it was in her power to do a good turn and surrender an escort to the party who desired it, this good turn was done; and before very long the *renversée* part of the *crème* began to speak very well of Mrs. Macfarlane. As an example of what I mean, I might mention that on one notable occasion, after she had been charming a certain royal personage for the greater part of the evening with the sparkle of her conversation, the royal personage, unaccustomed to deny himself anything in which he took pleasure, intended to combine food and pleasure in one, and escort his agreeable companion into supper on his own royal arm.

But his agreeable companion "kept her head;" she knew better than that. Why, think what such a momentary triumph would have cost her ! Imagine the accumulation of hatred which would be represented by that crowd of supercilious "*crème*" who would have envied and detested her as she headed that hungry procession; to say nothing of the life-long enmity of the beautiful Duchess, whose right it was to take the place to which she had been invited to exalt herself. Therefore, knowing all this, and, as I have remarked before, being a far-seeing woman.

she dared to refuse the proffered honour, and chance incurring royal displeasure rather than make for herself so many enemies in the ranks of her rivals. From that moment Mrs. Macfarlane became "that dear little modest woman who never lost her head, and always did the right thing." Such is fame! And as this and similar stories got about, the world of New York was anxious to come and see this wonderful woman who, alone and unaided, had sprung from the lowest ranks of their own society to the topmost place upon "the other side." And besides all this, there was another inducement, and a powerful one, too; they wanted to see her gowns. No one with Mrs. Macfarlane's wealth could have possibly gone through such a campaign as she was accredited with without ammunition of the very best, in the shape of jackets from Wolverhausen and dresses from Worth. Therefore, taking it all into consideration, I do not think you may feel surprise that a person like Mrs. McFarlane, "only a rich widow," should be presiding at a crowded reception in her house on Fifth Avenue.

Mrs. Macfarlane was "receiving," and two young ladies were pouring out the tea, as is customary on these occasions. One of these latter was our friend Constance Courtown, and right well she performed her arduous duties; having, as can be imagined, a word for everybody, and a pleasant something for each person who came up to take the tempting tea. It was wonderful, too, how cheerful everybody was,

or rather, how cheerful everybody seemed. A tea-party of English women is an affair so dull that it is marvellous to me how any person who has ever been to *one* could ever be persuaded to venture to a second. Everyone is depressed, and they remain depressed. There are no men there, as a rule, except a few wretched individuals who have been prevailed upon to enter, and find, to their despair, that there is no end to the tea which they are called upon to carry about the room, and absolutely no limit to the number of dirty cups full of untempting slops, which they are by everyone expected to replace. But they manage these things better in America. There are, perhaps, more men, but they do not count. The hilarity of the proceedings doesn't very much depend upon their presence or their absence. Ladies on the American side of the Atlantic are far more independent of the society of male kind than their English sisters. The men are not made nearly so much of as they are in the latter country. They are much better trained, and know their place—place number 2—far more satisfactorily than the much-spoilt, much-sought-after London man. I verily doubt if any American man would venture to declare his dislike for dirty cups; but would rather express the delight he thought he felt at the privilege which was accorded him in being permitted to render a service, however slight, to one of the other sex. I fear the young exquisites of New York are, in some respects, more polite, and certainly more submissive, than the

"*jeunesse dorée*," on the "other side." But there is expectation among them on this afternoon, for their hostess has informed some one that she expects three delightful Englishmen, whom she met coming across in the steamer—very nice, charming men, whom she used to meet at all the best houses in town.

This last is one for the charming men and *two* for herself, but why should she not pat herself upon the back, when opportunity offers ? "If you don't speak up for yourself, no one else will," was one of Mrs. Macfarlane's favourite mottoes. Now, three charming Englishmen, well-known society men on the other side, don't drop from the clouds every day in New York City. And therefore the company assembled were not at all displeased at the news which informed them of this welcome addition to their own rather monotonous society. The young men were almost as anxious to meet the new arrivals as were the ladies. They liked Englishmen—in the abstract, at least—they affected to copy them in many silly little ways; though if the truth be spoken, they were rather jealous of them in the flesh. An Englishman has a habit of being rather ready of speech and not easily defeated in the matter of small-talk—tea-table talk, if you will—and then the women made so much of them, and ran after them, addressing their conversation to them in preference to themselves, the only legitimate social stars of this their own city, that, taking it all in all, Englishmen were "rather a bore, stuck-up fellows who put on

‘lugs,’ and were much better out of the way;” but still it was not to be denied that they knew how to turn themselves out, and these three new arrivals might bring out the latest “smart” thing in clothes, and give them a wrinkle the imitation of which they already contemplated in the immediate future.

The Courtowns were, on the whole, less interested in Mrs. Macfarlane’s Englishmen than anyone else present. They had known that lady pretty intimately in the London world, and now, on her return to New York, they stayed by her and were among that lady’s chief supporters in this her hour of trial, when she was storming the fortress of the best families on their own particular ground. Constance and Florence had met so many Englishmen that one more or less, to them made little difference. Besides which, Florence never could get up any excitement about a man, were he English or American, for to her all that was noblest in mankind was centred in the person of her beloved Cecil. “Ah, should she ever see him again !” she thought, as, acceding to a request of her hostess, she moved to the piano to give “a little music.” What a long time ago it seemed when she played in that room at Lynnyear, and some one had leant over her and said, “Thank you, darling.”

Constance had, on the contrary, little time for such dreams. It is true she sometimes thought of the faithful Gerald; in fact, she only wished he were here at this moment; how very useful

he would be in handing round the cups; but she was in reality doing all she could to banish his image from her heart, for there existed a certain individual on whom she was striving to look with less of dislike. I say less of dislike, because at this time Constance disliked him cordially. I speak of a Mr. Fern—Amos L. Fern—the richest man of his year, worth millions if he were worth a cent.

CHAPTER XXI.

AMOS L. FERN.

Now Amos had looked at Constance and seen that she was fair. He had told himself that this was the kind of a wife which he, Amos, should by rights possess, to sit at the head of his table and adorn his house, so that people might say, "By Jove! Amos, what a lovely wife you have," just as they now said, "By Jove, Amos, what beautiful *sérvres* or what wonderful pictures you have."

Now, with Amos, to covet was to attempt to acquire, cost him what it might. Everything, he said, was a matter of dollars and cents; perhaps he was right. He always spoke about getting what he wanted, even if he were obliged to expend his bottom dollar. Of course this was only his pleasant little way, a kind of jest to make men smile; for they knew, and Amos knew, that his bottom dollar lay at the lower end of a very tall pile. But very rich men like to talk thus, and speak cheerfully of being reduced to poverty after the departure of their last coin of all. Poverty to them is something so far off that they can afford to crack their jokes upon it, just as we have often heard people amuse themselves at the expense of Noah and his flood, and wonder

whether we shall ever be obliged to take refuge in an ark, with a few elephants and mosquitoes as our companions.

But I fear I am making too long a story, for all this while Constance is pouring out the tea and Florence is playing the piano; but really, Amos L. Fern plays such an important part in the future of this history, that I cannot avoid telling you a little about him.

Suffice it for the present, at any rate, to tell you that Mr. Fern had announced it as his intention of laying siege to the affections of Miss Constance Courtown, and it did seem in very deed as if he were determined to spend his bottom dollar in the process, for he had already commenced operations by spending a small fortune in flowers and "candies," two things that are very potent factors in gaining access to an American lady's heart. And Constance, as I have said, was trying to overcome her rooted dislike of the man. Amos was not attractive; he was bumptious, overbearing and vulgar. He was rich, but aggressively so—if you can understand the expression—and was for ever forcing his riches down your throat. Now, Constance could prevail upon herself to swallow riches, indeed she had begun to do so by accepting the "candies" bought therewith, but to swallow Mr. Fern at the same time—there was the difficulty. Money, she used to tell herself, brings everything. Yes, but then she hadn't bargained for it to bring an Amos L. Fern. It *did*

seem hard that something so desirable should be tacked on to what was so much the reverse. Poor Amos! If he only knew; but perhaps he did know. At any rate, he seemed to know that money was his strong point, and, as I have said, he straightway proceeded to play this trump card.

To Constance, who had been courted and admired by some of the most charming men in the world, it seemed hard that in Amos she should meet her fate. She felt it was to be; she had a presentiment that Amos and his dollars, pitted against herself all alone, aided only by her dislike for the former, but hampered with a leaning for the latter, Amos and his dollars would win. Whether this presentiment was to come true or not we shall see in the course of our story.

Constance is pouring out tea, chatting and laughing as though she had nothing more substantial upon her mind than the weight of digesting the last slice of bread and butter. Mr. Fern is there, making great sheep's-eyes at her as he diligently sucks the end of his gold-headed cane. Silver wouldn't do for Amos, silver was cheap. I often wonder that the head of that cane was not manufactured of diamonds, for its owner did not like anything that was not worth a good round sum in dollars. Still, gold was good enough for tea party business, and, therefore, Amos stood sucking that golden knob.

He was not handsome—tall, thin, narrow-chested, and slightly stooping. His figure did not strike one

as that of a very athletic man; one could scarcely imagine Amos in flannels rowing on the river or playing a game of tennis.

"No," Constance told herself, "he mustn't ever try that sort of thing."

His hair was sandy, while small whiskers of the same colour gave a kind of frame to his white, unwholesome face. No, he certainly didn't look tempting. What a pity it was that he couldn't be gilded over like the top of his cane with some of the spare millions which he was holding out as a bait. I fear Constance was actually thinking something of this kind, while she tried to do her best and not look annoyed at the unspoken flattery of those sheep's-eyes which Mr. Fern was aiming at her over the lid of the teapot. Her patience was rewarded, for at this moment a diversion was created by the announcement of Captain. Sinclair, Mr. Drayton and Mr. Summers. Mrs. Macfarlane looked overjoyed, and walked quickly to the door to greet her steam-boat friends.

To say that Constance was astonished would be far from giving an adequate idea of what she felt. She was so surprised that she poured hot water into some one's second cup instead of milk, and put a chocolate in on the top of it by mistake for a lump of sugar, but after this slight betrayal of what she felt she suddenly grew calm; the next thing she felt was anger.

"How dared they come and take her by surprise

like that: what could Mrs. Macfarlane mean by springing a mine upon them in this manner? Why hadn't she told them?" She forgot that that lady had begun to mention the names of her friends, when she, Constance, had said, rather crushingly, "They really don't interest me, dear. I don't suppose it is anyone I ever heard of." She little thought that they were all three people she had very much heard of; one of them the affianced lover of her sister, the other a kind of privileged adorer of her own, and the third a much liked and most intimate friend. What did they want here? Though her heart leapt at sight of Gerald, she was angry. Just as she was making up her mind to Amos and his dollars, here came the very man who of all others might influence her against him, and prevent her making up her mind in the manner to which it inclined. "Yes," once again she said, "it is hard, very hard." Ten minutes ago when she thought she had decided to take the dollars, and Amos along with them, she had made this remark. Now that Gerald had appeared upon the scene, and there seemed a prospect of something occurring to prevent her from closing on her prize, she used these selfsame words, "it is hard, very hard." Such is the consistency of the female mind. And feeling thus, Constance put the tea-pot upon the table with such a bang that Gerald looked up and saw her. Well, it was some gratification to see his eyes light up and his whole face beam with delight, as he came forward

to greet her. Yes, he looked very nice, very clean, she thought, as her eyes for one moment wandered away to poor Amos, who certainly did not improve by force of contrast. But still, he had no business to be here, and she intended to tell him so "right away." Nevertheless, she held out her hand with a ravishing smile, such a smile as Amos had never seen, and bade Gerald welcome to America.

"Why, you two are acquainted, I declare," exclaimed their hostess. "I had no idea you knew Mr. Drayton, Constance. Let me introduce you to Mr. Summers and Captain Sinclair. Why, where is Captain Sinclair?"

"Oh, I know them both very well," said Constance, shaking hands warmly with Charlie, for Sinclair had disappeared.

"Well, that is odd," continued Mrs. Macfarlane. "Here, let me introduce you: Mrs. Cliton, Mr. Drayton; Mrs. Cliton, Mr. Summers; Mrs. Loder, my friend Mr. Drayton, my friend Mr. Summers," and so on through a whole course of introductions, saying the names of each in a clear, distinct voice, so that hereafter there could never be any doubt about the formality of their first introduction. It would be well if some English people would follow this example instead of only muttering, "let me introduce you," and then waiting for the two parties concerned to bow, and leave them to discover who they are as best they can. In America, also, there can

never be any mistake as to identity subsequent to the introduction, for there it is the fashion to address every one by name before speaking to them; thus, Mrs. Cliton immediately turned to Charlie and said, "Glad to meet, you Mr. Summers; is this your first visit to our country?" while another lady said, "Happy to meet you, Mr. Drayton; do you propose to make a long stay?"

These two gentlemen were soon busy answering these and similar questions, talking away as though they had known everybody there assembled ever since they could remember, and making themselves agreeable, according as they each knew how. Meanwhile, where was Cecil?

There is a deal of instinct about love, and the moment Cecil entered that room, he felt that Florence was there also. Where was she? Why, there, of course. Who else but she could make the piano give forth music like that? His heart gave one great beat, and escaping from his hostess as soon he was able, in a moment he was standing behind her chair. Florence had not perceived him coming, or if she did, didn't know who it was was there. Absorbed in her music, she played on, caring little for the distant hubbub caused by the entrance of these new arrivals. Right through to the end she played, and then she ceased; but as she put out her hands to remove the music from its stand before her, some one behind said, "Thank you, my darling." That voice, those tones! her whole

body thrilled with excitement at the sound. Could it be? It was; it's true!

"Oh, Cecil, how you startled me; how did you get there, oh!" and her voice shook as tho' the sudden shock to her feelings had been too much for her, and she were about to break down.

"Play on," whispered Cecil, "play something, dearest; then I can stay here and talk to you. Compose yourself and strum something, anything, so that the crowd may not divide us yet." Mechanically she obeyed; and striking the keys, her fingers wandered forth into a waltz—an air they both had loved, to the tune of which they had danced together times out of number. To his dying day Cecil will remember that tune; and now, whenever he hears it, rushes from the room on the pretext of the first excuse he can invent. That tune reminds him of his love—his love he now has found only to lose again, and lose again for ever.

"Where are you living?" whispered Cecil, bending over her as she played. "The same place where I used to write, till your father put his veto on all correspondence?"

Florence nodded.

"Why does he hate me so?" meaning the father.

"He doesn't hate you."

"Well, what is it he dislikes—my poverty?"

Another nod of the head told him he was right.

"Father has a mania for wealth," she added; "he's

quite crazy about money. See that ?" nodding her head in the direction of Amos.

"See what !" answered Cecil, looking vaguely around.

"That tall man, sucking the handle of his cane."

"Yes, what of him ?"

"He's rich."

"Really," replied Cecil, but faintly interested. "Poor fellow, he ought to be."

"Poor fellow ? Poor Constance !"

"Why poor Constance ?" answered he; all animation now, and looking at Amos once again.

"Father is set on her marrying Mr. Fern, and Mr. Fern is set on it too."

"Impossible ! but Constance ?"

"Oh; Constance can't be expected to hold out against an army. She'll give in, and do it."

"Oh, horrible ! it's barbarous," ejaculated Cecil; "but *you* have held out against an army, haven't you, dear ? No one was on *your* side in your constancy to me."

"Ah ! that's different," she said. "You see, I *loved* you; Constance has nothing of that sort to prevent her, so she's lawful prey."

"But Gerald loves her."

"Well, why doesn't Gerald say so ? Besides, even if he does, I don't see why it follows that she loves Gerald. No, I have made up my mind to it, for I fear Constance will become Mrs. Fern."

Florence stopped playing, and Cecil was obliged

to leave her and cross over the room to where his hostess was sitting. Mrs. Macfarlane was in great form; she considered her party had been a success; everybody had come; and besides which, she felt there was some undercurrent of romance connected with these three Englishmen and the beautiful Miss Courtowns; and no woman is averse to having a finger in a pie of that material. Why had Captain Sinclair rushed off to where Florence was playing the piano, and stood there, stock still, regardless of appearances ! or of the fact that he had not been properly introduced to anyone in the room; and why were Constance's eyes so feverishly bright, and her laugh so very much more gay than usual ? while Mrs. Courtown, poor woman, looked for all the world like a hen who sees her chickens swooped upon by some well-known foe. No wonder this much-manceuvring mother did not seem altogether delighted at the turn affairs had taken; for had not her husband given his final and absolute refusal to listen to any idea of a match between Florence and Captain Sinclair ? and had he not also instructed her to do all in her power to aid and abet Amos L. Fern in his suit ? Yes, fate seemed altogether against her; and Mrs. Courtown sighed. Things had begun to complicate in a manner which threatened to become unpleasant; and Mrs. Courtown was an easy-going woman.

The mother of marriageable daughters does not always have a too rosy time.

Amos, too, had caught the infection, and his little eyes glittered as though he could have said with the ogre, "Fe, Fo, Fum; I smell the blood of an Englishman; be he alive, or be he dead, I'll sell his bones to make my bread." By this I don't wish to convey that Amos was a person of a blood-thirsty nature; nor did he, in reality, propose to make his meal off the bones of his rival; he was too particular for that, Amos seldom dined without the assistance of a French cook; but it *was* a little aggravating, just when everything was going so swimmingly, and he had got things so well *en train* for the grand *coup* and final assault upon the fortress of the affections of his fair. Everything had been most carefully prepared, the whole campaign mapped out in every detail; so many dollars' worth of flowers, so many weeks of continuous "candies," and so much time and labour in little attentions, while at every opportunity there was to be, as we have seen, an incessant fire of expressive glances from the well-stocked battery of his eyes. And then, at the right moment, when all approaches to the fortress had been weakened by the united perseverance of these various devices, Amos himself would storm it in person, and carry the place by assault.

You see that Mr. Fern was very martial in his ideas, and he, indeed, felt that he was cutting out a prize; "but it didn't matter to anyone else, anyhow," he would have argued, whatever means he preferred

to adopt for the furtherance of his purpose; but suddenly here dropped from the clouds—or rather, the ocean—someone to whom it did seem to matter “anyhow,” after all. No thought of a rival had ever entered the mind of Mr. Fern; in fact, there was not much space in that locality for a rival to enter, all the spare room being already occupied by Amos himself. Also, when a man of Mr. Fern’s well-known wealth chose to enter the lists, the *jeunesse* of New York, *dorté* only by courtesy, when in contrast to such a millionaire, held discreetly aloof, never dreaming of a presumption which might place them in a position antagonistic to a man possessed of such vast resources under his control. Therefore, Mr. Fern had felt the way was clear till that moment, when he permitted himself to murmur—I mean, think—“Fe, Fo, Fum,” in Mrs. Macfarlane’s drawing-room.

As Amos continued to suck his cane and endeavoured to draw Constance into conversation with his most alluring smile, you would not have believed him capable of anything in the shape of a Fe-Fo-Fum. But yet it was so. Gerald’s appearance had caused a total change in Constance’s manner, perceptible, but yet not to be explained, and the combativeness of this man’s nature was roused. There was plenty of latent energy in Mr. Fern’s composition when occasion called it forth; this, then, was an occasion for its display, and Amos smiled a grim smile as he thought how he would crush his adver-

sary at the very start. Meantime, Gerald, absolutely unconscious of anything wrong, was literally basking in the light of Constance's countenance, and "chaffing" with her in a manner perfectly unintelligible to those who happened to overhear his conversation. Those who did overhear him probably considered him rude, for as I said once before, people don't "chaff" in America.

There were once two Englishmen full of fun, and always ready to have a sly dig at one another, for they loved to draw each other out in the pastime of repartee; and I heard them described as a quarrelsome couple, who were always trying to provoke a row and disturb the harmony of the company. "Quarrelsome!" They had neither of them ever been angry in their lives. So it probably seemed now that Gerald and Constance were quarrelling, for the latter was teasing him much in her old way, and he was perfectly revelling in the occupation of defending himself and finding that, as of old, in the matter of "chaff," he was simply nowhere with this beautiful antagonist. While this was going on, Amos was not idle. He crossed over to the other side of the room, where Mrs. Courtown sat, to prepare the way to create a diversion in his favour. His object was to obtain her sanction to a theatre party for the ensuing evening. As may be imagined, this was not difficult to procure, and armed with these tidings, he returned to the tea-table and gave his invitation to Constance. Would they go with

him to Wallack's Theatre to-morrow night—it was a first night, and he had a box ? Mrs. Courtown had given her consent. He hoped they would do him the honour of having supper at Delmonico's afterwards.

Constance, of course, was delighted. This was dollars. Then he turned to Gerald, and with true American politeness, hoped that young man would give him the pleasure of being present also, and, if he might be presented to his friends, he should be very glad if they too would honour him with their company. The introduction was duly effected, and both of our friends were only too delighted to accept such a tempting invitation. Cecil, indeed, almost jumped at it, for already he could imagine the whispered conversations he would manage with Florence at the back of the box; and Charlie, no less pleased, on the way home declared it was devilish civil of that chap Fern to ask them to supper to-morrow; he had heard of American hospitality, and, by Jove ! it had begun already. By this it will be seen that Amos was no fool, and Constance gave him a charming smile as she thanked him for so kindly giving them the prospect of such a pleasant evening, and Mrs. Macfarlane told him in her most gushing manner that she had been sure he would help her make the stay of her English friends in this city an agreeable one, and if they were to receive *his* hospitality they were sure to have a lovely time. They themselves began to think so

already, and as they strolled home to their hotel, congratulated each other on the happy thought which had induced them to make the voyage.

"Render unto Cæsar, my dear fellows," said Charlie. "It strikes me that had it not been for me, we none of us should be here now; therefore, before you begin to enjoy yourselves, supposing you render me the thanks that are my due."

"All right, Charlie," said Gerald, laughing, "we are not ungrateful, my boy."

And Cecil looked at him and smiled; glad to see that he was regaining his wonted spirits, and could bear to refer to the reason of his departure, for the light-hearted lad had been sadly cast down of late; that parting under the old oak-tree in that Sussex valley had made an impression on him which he was unable to shake off, nor would he ever quite shake it off.

The first taste of love is to partake of the apple of knowledge, to eat of the tree of good and of evil, and he who has once done this can never again quite return to the passionless, colourless happiness of youth. A scratch upon a polished surface can never be altogether effaced, though the surface may shine as brightly as it did in days of yore. Thus, the human heart is like a face of polished metal, where every touch of passion shall leave a mark indelible as life itself. When "ignorance is bliss" is it "folly to be wise"? Not always. "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." But it is

till the first heat of passion is over, till the bitterness of loving is past, that men realise the truth these lines. To him in whose memory there be cherished spot, life must indeed be blank.

CHAPTER XXII.

DELMONICO'S.

THE days passed pleasantly enough. All of our three friends were happy. America was new to them, and the ways and customs, which differed from their own, never failed to interest and please. Novelty is always agreeable, and if to novelty be added substantial comfort and the company of one's own ideal of the other sex, then it is more than agreeable—it is delightful.

Cecil and Florence were, of course, happy. These few weeks were to be to them an oasis of joy in the midst of a desert of future grief. Constance and Gerald were happy, though, in their own peculiar way. The former found it immensely diverting to irritate her patient adorer by little intervals of sweetness towards Mr. Fern. Thus Amos, too, was content, and began to think that after all he had perhaps exaggerated the importance of his rival. In Mona, Charlie Summers found just that kind of nature which suited his present frame of mind. Those pathetic eyes and that beautiful face seemed like balm to his troubled heart; and when, after a short interval, he poured out to her all his troubles, the quiet sympathy of that sweet nature was given him to the

very full; and invaluable it was for him that at this crisis he found such a comforter, whose voice could soften over the bitterness that had entered his soul, and prevent all that was gentlest and all that was best within him from turning into cynical disbelief.

Dinners at Delmonico's, theatre parties, dances and receptions. The New York season had begun its usual round, and many a merry time was spent during these few weeks. I don't think that Gerald at that time quite realised that Constance could think seriously of reciprocating the very open admiration of Mr. Fern. Of his devotion there was little doubt, but this caused Gerald no surprise. The only surprise he could feel would be, was that everybody else was not devoted to her, too.

And so the time went by, and Mr. Fern made things pleasant all round by the hospitable manner in which he spent his dollars. Mrs. Macfarlane was right. If Mr. Fern chose to assist her in entertaining her English friends, their stay in New York would be an agreeable one. He had so chosen, and the result was as she had anticipated. Cecil had confided to Florence how he had given up the service for her sake, and that now, more than ever, he was bound to win her, as she shared his allegiance with no rival, not even his profession. Mr. Courtown had received Captain Sinclair with distinct coldness, and at once forbade his consent to the match; but he could not prevent their meeting, which, indeed, they managed to do pretty often. But Cecil felt

that he was living in a fools' paradise, and that the awakening must soon come. If Mr. Courtown refused to relent, he and Florence must part. So much he had ventured to tell her; but the idea of any such cruel termination to their vows of constancy was almost more than they could bear.

Let us look at our friends assembled at Delmonico's to dine, on the occasion of a dinner given by Gerald as some slight return for all Mr. Fern's hospitality. They are down-stairs in the public room, as they had considered it more cheerful to be where they could see the people. The place is crowded, there is a hum of voices and a clatter of knives and forks. The tables are all taken, and even little knots of people are sitting patiently in the vestibule, waiting for places where they too may take seats and dine.

It is a cheerful scene, but a foreign-looking one to Englishmen. Gerald used to say it reminded him of Paris, both from the appearance of the people and the excellence of the cuisine. As is well known, in New York ladies do not dress for the theatre, and before going there they dine in bonnets, according to the manner of fashionable France. The men, of course, are in evening dress, and this mixture of toilettes is, I suppose, what gives the place a foreign air. And the dinner! Well, those Delmonico dinners opened the eyes of our English friends and made them realise, what a desert their own London must be for unfortunate people who

might be stranded there as strangers, without a home, without a club. And the bill! This made them open their eyes too; but Charlie used to say, you only had to become accustomed to look upon each dollar as a shilling, and then it would come quite natural to consider everything in New York remarkably cheap.

On this night they are all in excellent spirits; they had been talking of Lynnyear and the cheery times they spent at that charming spot.

"This clatter and racket is rather different to those somewhat solemn feasts," said Constance.

"Yes," answered Charlie. "I confess I feel more frivolous at this moment than ever I did when sitting in awe of that important butler and his white-headed footmen. I used to smile at him with my blandest smile whenever I caught his eye, so that he might look upon me with favour and take an interest in the tide of my champagne glass. I have often heard of butlers who purposely miss out a fellow when pouring out the wine, so that they may be tipped to look after them better. And in some houses, I believe, if you don't tip the butler, you may go thirsty for all he cares. So, whenever I see any one's glass constantly full, I wonder how much that desirable state of things has cost the person to whom that glass belongs. But fancy tipping the Lynnyear butler—oh my! he'd go and sneak, I believe, and tell his lordship what you'd done. It curdles me to think of such an event."

"Well, that's odd," remarked George Fairfield, a young American, one of the party. "I never heard of that being done before, but you English certainly do have some extraordinary customs; why, if I were the host I should be quite mortified if I thought my guests had to spend money before they could get a drink; it would discourage me so that I would never entertain again."

"Well," continued Charlie, "it's not a nice idea, but how in the world can one prevent it—the servants themselves won't tell you; of that you may be sure; and if your guests tell of your servants, it would most likely oblige you to send away a butler who may suit you very well and who, in all other respects, might be a most invaluable man."

"Well, there's something in that," answered Mr. Fairfield.

"Yes," pursued Charlie, "I like to get something into my remarks, just as I like to get something into my glass."

Mr. Fairfield looked puzzled, but nevertheless he managed to glance towards Charlie and smile.

"Well, if I couldn't get enough to drink without tipping the servant, I'd tip," said Amos, as though nothing could possibly be easier.

"Well, and if I caught a chap tipping my servants I'd never ask him to the house again," retorted Gerald. "It's a tax upon one's poor friends which it is not fair to permit. Rich men often spoil the market for other people," he concluded, with a look at Mr.

Fern, which that gentleman returned with a stare of surprise, as though he wondered in what sort of society a man could mix who owned to the possession of poor friends.

"Mr. Fern, please give me the whole programme for to-morrow," interrupted Constance, breaking in upon the unpleasant turn the conversation threatened to take. "We are all so looking forward to the trip you have promised us in your yacht."

"Yes," added Cecil, with his courteous smile, "really, Mr. Fern, we are most indebted to you for the kindness you have shown us during our stay, and it will be a good wind up to go up the Hudson to-morrow."

Then Amos unfolded his plans, and instructed his future guests as to where they should meet him and the steam yacht on the morrow, and view with him the beauties and wonders of the Hudson. I say wonders, because the beauties of that river are simply a series of wonders to those who have never before been on the broad surface of that beautiful stream.

The conversation, thus turned into safer channels, the rest of the evening passed agreeably enough, and few of the many parties who have made merry in that famous restaurant were more cheerful or more merry than this party of our own particular friends.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UP THE HUDSON.

THE next day shone bright and fine, and the steam yacht of Mr. Fern took the whole party on board and conveyed them up the river. I will not here relate at length the delights of that expedition; the charms of such voyages as this one must be felt to be understood. Those who have ever spent an autumn day gliding along this most beautiful of rivers, will readily picture to themselves what pleasure was felt by people who now took such a voyage for the first time, while those who have never seen the scenes of which I speak would be unlikely to appreciate a detailed account of what they felt and what they saw. The yacht was still close to New York—close to a large city, a centre of business, a centre of population—it seemed impossible, and yet it was so.

“By Jove ! isn't this lovely ?” exclaimed Gerald, as he gazed around on towering rocks and wooded hills, the latter glorious with every shade of yellow and of gold that autumn tints had brought. One might have been miles from civilisation. In the wilds of New Zealand, along the banks of the broad Waikato, one might have met such a scene; but

here, just outside the city, it could scarcely be believed.

"Well," declared Charlie, "I like this awfully. I like to have the 'grandeur of nature' brought to my door. It's such a bore, having to go in search of it, because after one has seen it, it is generally necessary to sit down and dine beside a camp-fire off tinned meats and scraps, or, at the best, beneath the roof of some very modest hotel. But here we are seeing the best of everything, with civilisation just under our lee, a steam yacht to see it from, and our comfortable homes to dine at on our return."

"Well, that's one way of appreciating beautiful scenery," laughed Constance. "But I really believe you thought America consisted of Broadway, Fifth Avenue, and 'out West.' You English people don't give us credit for half the lovely things and lovely places we possess. I believe, too, you had a faint idea we lived like savages out here; you always exhibit such naïve surprise when you find anything that comes up to your notions of comfort. Confess, Mr. Summers. Didn't you expect to find things quite different to what you had been accustomed?"

"Well," replied Charlie, "I own I didn't expect to find things quite so nice, though, of course, meeting you, Miss Constance, had prepared me for the beautiful. Don't get angry," he added, as that young lady frowned at the receipt of this audacious compliment. "But I thought you were perhaps fishing, and felt something was expected of me."

But to continue, as my opinion *has* been asked, what delights me most is that you all seem to have such a perfectly delicious notion of comfort; and I am one of the most fortunate of individuals in being allowed to share in that all-pervading luxury, chiefly owing to the bountiful kindness of our host, Mr. Fern;" and Charlie terminated this polite speech with a bow.

"I am very glad you are enjoying yourself," said Amos, smiling. "I am only too pleased to be of any service to Mrs. Courtown and her friends."

This day upon the river was a day to be remembered, for it was the last on which the same party would be together. When we meet them in any future excursions of pleasure, two at least of their number will be absent, for they will have fallen out of the running to pursue that path which is pointed out by the directing finger of relentless Fate.

In a few days' time Charlie was going "out West," and Gerald had determined to accompany him, while Cecil intended to stay on in New York, in order to have a final interview with Mr. Courtown, who was at present absent, and make a last effort to persuade that gentleman to give his consent to his marriage with his daughter Florence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FLORENCE AND CECIL.

MR. COURTOWN remaining obdurate, and absolutely refusing to withdraw his opposition to the match of his eldest daughter with one of those peniless Englishmen, as he described Captain Sinclair, one of the chief ornaments of Her Majesty's Grenadier Guards, there was no course left open to the couple in question, with the exception of an utter ignoring of parental authority and flight, or honourable capitulation and renouncement of all their vows of love and constancy. The latter course was hard, involving as it did, perhaps, the happiness of two whole lives; for Sinclair and Florence were not of the sort who lightly love and easily forget. Theirs were two deep and earnest natures; there was little that was superficial about either of them, and whatever they found to do, they did it with all their might, and thus, when they had made up their minds to love one another, and devote the remainder of their lives to the rendering of each other happy, it was no easy task to unmake those minds and surrender what they both had so greatly counted on. But hard as this was, to a person of Cecil's temperament, the other course was harder; the alternative

of taking a girl from the protection of her father, and away from the home of her childhood, without that father's sanction or the blessing of a mother. Cecil had very strict, perhaps old-fashioned, notions of right and wrong, honour and dishonour, and to steal his bride like a thief in the night was to his upright understanding little short of committing a crime—a crime which would ever be as a bad omen to a union which Heaven would never bless. Even could he reconcile his conscience to such an act, he felt unable to persuade his love to take a leap in the dark, as this would be in fact, a leap from home and loved ones, luxury and comfort, to exile from home, displeasure of loved ones, and in the place of luxury and comfort, something akin to poverty and perchance hardship and toil. For now that he had left his profession, what had he to look to; true, he had expectations, but one cannot live on those, though I have been told some people do, but even they could scarcely venture to marry upon these distant shadows, this reflection of future years. Should anything occur to mar the even tenor of their days, should his wife ever pine for the love of her relations, should misfortune of any kind befall her, it would be more than he could bear. He was a man. Alone he could face misfortune; yea more, alone he *would* face it, but if she he loved had to share his trouble, should he be the means of clouding that life, which was to him so dear, he knew he should feel a coward and a knave. And Florence, to whom he told

all this, smiled sadly as she looked with admiration at her noble love. *He* a coward! The very thought of such a thing made her smile. But what he said to her was the law which guided her life. Had he told her to fly with him, gladly, willingly would she have given up everything for his dear sake; but when he declared that to do this would lower him in his own esteem, and make him feel he was not acting up to that standard of honour of which she too was so proud, then, be it so; in him she had a belief implicit in its confidence and touching in its trust. She would not urge him; she understood the struggle between right and wrong, inclination and duty, honour and dishonour, that was going on in that heart, the chivalry of which was more of a care to her than ever it could be to himself. Not for one moment would she stand in his way, or obstruct the path of duty by any selfish thought of self.

She was sure of his love, sure as she was that to-night the sun would set and to-morrow once more rise. He pointed out the path. He it was who intended to sacrifice his future, his life and his all, for the sake of honour, the sake of right. Should she be behind in that self-sacrifice? Should she endeavour to turn him aside from the way which honour called, and by her inferiority to him, her ideal, tarnish that burnished shield and drag him down to her own mean level? No, never! A thousand times never! she thought. To have known this man was a privilege, to have studied the workings of a character

the noble truthfulness of which was to her every day a revelation, had been a pleasure and a joy which is accorded to few. Should she, then, signalise this joy by herself stretching forth the hand which should endeavour to destroy the thing she had worshipped? The very thought brought a smile to her lips, a smile of beauty such as one does not often see, a sad yet happy smile; sad for the worldly temptation which the wearer has decided to relinquish, but a sadness which gradually breaks into a smile of happiness as the heart is illumined with a holy joy, the joy of realising that all that's best in man's imperfect nature has conquered. Self has been cast away, and right has triumphed in the end.

I fear I have given too long an analysis of Florence's feelings, but I dreaded lest she should be misunderstood and looked upon as an ordinary girl, who renounced her lover at the earliest provocation. Such the world might have thought her, but Florence was not an ordinary girl; she cared not one fig for the world or its thought of what she did. She cared only for her lover and the high standard of right which, in his footsteps, she endeavoured but imperfectly to follow.

"The path of glory leads but to the grave;" and is not the path of duty oftentimes the path of glory, too? Yes, indeed, *it* also may lead unto the grave, the grave of hopes, the grave of dreams, but what of that! If the path of duty were not hard, where then would be the virtue in treading that thorny

road, which included obedience to her father, deference to her mother's entreaties, and renunciation of self! Thus it was that one afternoon when they had met at the house of a friend, Cecil explained to her how it seemed to him that things lay, and concluded by telling her that they must take one of two hard courses—the less hard of the two, and part.

She looked up at him with a sad, trusting smile. "You mean it, Cecil," she said, at last, her tender gaze all blurred with tears. "You know what is right, dearest, tell it me; I am so weak, so foolish, that all the right I know is what my heart dictates, but you, Cecil," she continued, brushing away her tears, "you are strong and noble, you I know will do what is right, and in so doing set me an example which I shall be happy may I follow."

"My brave little girl," he answered, taking her hands in his, "you are not foolish or weak; had you been so, I could never have loved you as I have done. Oh, would to God we had never met!" he burst forth in tones which betrayed the anguish of that deep-feeling nature. "Oh, do not cry, my darling, I cannot bear it; for I know it is I who have caused those tears to flow. Were it not for me, your face would still be smiling gladly and your sweet cheeks dimpled over as of old. Oh, would to God we had never met!" and the strong man buried his face in his hands as he gave vent to these passionate words.

"No, no, do not say that," she exclaimed. "Look,

I am not crying now," she went on in a voice which struggled to be calm, yet spoke as though there were that in her throat which belied her words. "Cecil, look at me," she continued, taking his hands from before his face, "I am smiling now." And indeed she was—as an April sun looks smiling through the rain.

"What are tears!" brushing the drops away from her eyes with a gesture of contempt. "A woman's tears—bah! things that ebb and flow as easily as the summer tide. We weep for pain, we weep for disappointment, perhaps even weep for the veriest trifles that may annoy us: so tears are small index of the female mind. No, Cecil, I will not cry now and spoil our last hour together. It's over now," she went on with one last convulsive sob, "I am myself again. The thing we have to do is hard, and I won't be a little fool again, Cecil, and make it worse for both by sobbing like some silly school-girl, who doesn't know her lesson. Come, Cecil, don't be so downcast, let's be brave together," she pleaded; and thus in the hour of trial the weak gave strength to the strong, and the woman's noble repression of self went to help her hero on the path he had marked out for himself to follow.

"Darling," he said, "every unselfish word you speak only makes me sadder still, but not altogether so, and I will not wish we had never met, but rather thank a merciful Providence which allowed me to meet a nature such as yours, contact with which

has made me better than I was, and proved to me that there are people in this world yet unsullied by the temptations which beset them. Florence, I shall never forget you, and never shall I care to love another woman. I have given up my profession, but now that the air is full of war and rumours of war, I may get re-employment and active service; and wherever I go, whatever may befall me, your image shall illumine my path, and I will never do anything which I should be ashamed to own to you. To my imagination you shall always be my wife, my love, my guardian angel, in whose keeping I shall be, and whose approval I shall strive to merit. Darling, that day when we plighted our troth beneath those ancient trees in the lovers' walk at Lynnyear will ever be almost the brightest spot in my memory, and the one upon which my mind will look back with never-failing pleasure. But *the* . brightest day, *the* one hour which will shine out for me beyond all others as long as I shall live, will be this one, this very hour, when I held your hands in mine, and then was revealed unto me the true beauty of your mind, proving to me that in the matter of self-sacrifice I should have failed had it not been for you; yes, even been tempted to overthrow the right and honour, and choose the wrong and lasting dishonour, had not you, my brave, my noble love, aided and supported me in this hour of trial."

"Cecil," she replied, "all that is best in me is but

the result of your own good teaching. We must part, love; you go to your work, your active life and its countless duties, which will serve to occupy your mind and deaden memories of grief. I go to my home, obliged to look dutiful when rebellion is in my heart, compelled to share in pleasures with a sorrow like a weight of lead nigh weighing me down. In short, I shall be obliged to lead the life of a hypocrite; smile when I fain would weep, and laugh when rather, far, I would cry with anguish; but, Cecil, through all this I will not forget you. Like you, I will do my duty, and like you, will I strive to obtain the approbation of the only being I have ever loved. This will support me. What would Cecil have me do? what would Cecil have me say? will be the star that shall in future guide me. What more can I say than this? Now, love, the time has come; now let us part—now we are both firm, both strong. We shed no childish tears now; our grief is too deep for that. There will be plenty of time for useless weeping when this day has gone. My noble love, my hero, my life, adieu.”

In silence, for notwithstanding his boast of strength he could not trust himself to speak, he clasped her to his breast. Did the heavens ever witness a more chaste embrace! Did the angels ever rejoice over the triumph of two such noble hearts! I trow not.

Once, twice, thrice he kissed those lips, around which even yet there lurked the traces of a smile, a

smile to bid him be of good cheer and not give way at this moment of supremest grief.

Life is made up of partings. Ah, me ! what pain it is to part, and many there are who may look unfeeling, but in reality conceal their hurt to give strength to those they love. If Florence Courtown shall gain the reward she merits, that reward should be a martyr's crown. In silence they parted; in silence, but without a tear. They had the hereafter in which to weep, a hereafter which, in the case of the girl, would be all marred with tears. In the days gone by she had pointed to Cecil as "her fate." Now, like those days, he too had gone. Poor child ! Doubtless her fate was marked out, but it had yet to come.

CHAPTER XXV.

A GLANCE AT THE FUTURE.

I THINK it would not here be out of place to look ahead and follow up that fate. As may well be imagined, after the foregoing scene, the future life of Florence Courtown was not to be a very happy one. I promised above not to dwell over the sad portions of my story; life is sufficiently full of grief without one wishing to revel in "the luxury of love" in print; therefore, I will sketch the future three years, in so far as they affected our present heroine, in the briefest manner of which I am capable.

As Florence said, her life was to be henceforth a sham—a counterfeit hypocrisy. She smiled when others smiled, and laughed when others bid her join in their mirth, but all the while her heart was heavy within her, and there was no gladness in her voice. After something like a year of this joyless existence, after a weary round of pleasure and festivity, when pleasure was but a name and festivity a very mockery indeed, it chanced that one saw her, and straightway loved.

It was some time before Florence could realise that any one could go out of his way to seek to win her heart—*her heart!* She smiled, almost, as she

thought how little of that was in her keeping. But when she could no longer affect to misunderstand intentions that could but have one meaning, she recoiled in horror at the thought. *She* love! Why, the very idea was too absurd. Her admirer proposed, and was refused. The reason she gave for her refusal was that she could not love him. The disappointed lover was an excellent match, according as the world estimates these things; he was pleasant, and, as far as Florence knew, a very charming person, but she mentally compared him to Cecil, and found him wanting. Poor man, it was rather hard for him to be weighed in the balance with a beau-ideal. Not many of us would be chosen if we had to submit to comparison with a hero. It was not Mr. Goodwin's fault—that was his name—if he but faintly resembled Cecil Sinclair. It was rather his misfortune to come after such an individual. But facts are stubborn things, and so sometimes are the affections; and having once loved a Sinclair, Florence told herself she could not love a Goodwin. And what was more, she told that gentleman so to his face; she told him very gently, very kindly, but firmly and decidedly, she had no heart to give. Some men would have been contented with this information, but Mr. Goodwin had an excuse. The whole of Florence's family was on his side; in point of numbers he had the best of it. The family were beginning to get uneasy at Florence's conduct, grieved to see the mechanical way in which she conscientiously

performed all her duties, social and otherwise. The life she was leading was unnatural to her; she who had always been so gay, so happy, was now but seldom either, unless a sad, wistful smile could be described as indicative of gaiety, or a settled air of patient resignation betokened happiness. The father began to realise, too late, that perhaps it would have been better for his daughter had she been allowed to follow the dictates of her heart. But how many fathers who have preferred that their daughters should follow their parental dictation rather than that of their own hearts, have discovered too late that they might have been wiser had they let things run their course, but Mr. Courtown did not, naturally, own as much even to himself. All he did own was that Florence required a change; and a change, as he interpreted it, meant marriage. Florence must be married, and put away morbid thoughts.

Here was a very desirable *parti* who wished to marry her, and him Florence should marry. Small wonder then that the poor girl, worn out with the terrible ordeal through which she had passed, wearied by the hard-fought battle she had waged in her endeavour to act according to her standard of right, should have been left with little strength for another contest, a contest wherein she stood alone against fearful odds. Before, she had Cecil on her side, a very tower of strength; now weakened, disheartened and low-spirited, she had but herself upon whom to depend. Can you feel surprise that she

gave way; that Mr. Goodwin, backed by the family, gained his point; and Florence, unable to give her heart, yielded to continual pressure and promised to give her hand? There is a limit to the strength of all resistance, and that limit had come for Florence. She told her story to the man who was destined to become her husband, explained to him that she was wedded to another by her word, that to another her love belonged.

He smiled, and said he would take all risk. Then Florence resigned herself to the inevitable. She told herself it had to be. She was only in the way at home. She felt out of place in that atmosphere of frivolity and pleasure. She was nought but a wet-blanket to the happiness of her sisters. Here was a man who said she could render his life a happy one; it seemed she could still be of use in this weary world. Well, be it so. She would marry him and do her utmost to fulfill her duty, and though she could not give her love, yet would she never let her husband regret the knot which tied them together. And as may be supposed, she kept her word. Mr. Goodwin loaded her with presents, cared for her in every way; her comfort and her luxury were his one perpetual thought, and smiles of gratitude and tender words were his reward. "But can bodily comfort minister to a mind diseased?" We know it cannot; and perhaps no one will ever guess what those smiles cost poor Florence, or how hard it was to seem to be happy and make the sunshine of a home

when all around her seemed dark and drear. Her life was void of interest, it was colourless and grey; she existed, and that was all. She would not think, that would have driven her mad, but just lived on, and on, and on; one day was like another, one person the same as another. Florence's three years of married life were a succession of long, bleak months, that only varied one by one, according as to the seasons to which they belonged. True, she had an interest. A child was born to her, a boy. But no, not even he could cure the wound which love had made, or occupy the vacant, gaping void in that heart which she had given away, for once and for ever. And yet, had she but known it, it was that very boy, on whom, though she lavished such tender care, yet looked with feelings less fond than mothers usually bear towards their first-born, who was destined to set her free; destined to open the door of that earthly cage which imprisoned her soul, and let it go free, free to mount on high, away through space, until it reached the bright blue sky and those who awaited it beyond. Verily, like glory, the path of duty had led but to the grave.

A summer's day. All is still save the murmur of a brook, the lazy hum of insect life, and a gentle rustling as some passing breeze disturbs the branches whose leaves cast long shadows across the bright green grass; shadows cast upon two forms that lay reclining on that velvet turf. Side by side there

slept, a mother and her boy. Alone among the beauties of nature they slept. The breeze fanned them, and gently stirred the lashes which lay like rims of shade beneath their eyes. The insects hummed round them; countless myriads united to make that drowsy lullaby. The trees sheltered them, and they slept. What a picture! The mother young and fair; the child, in all the budding unconsciousness of infancy, drawing fresh life with every breath. Look at them! For never again shall they so sleep till their appointed time has come to meet once more in Heaven above. For see—the child awakens! Why does he awaken? No sound has beat upon the silence all around; no wind has rudely ruffled those childish cheeks; no shade has left those guardian trees, and yet he wakes! The dawning strength within him, perhaps, is too vigorous to remain so long at rest. He wakes, but the mother sleeps on. She, perchance, may need this rest. Trouble may have left her tired. If so, she soon shall rest indeed. “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” What beautiful words! What infinite hope is there not contained in that one sweet promise. Perhaps in her sleep the mother heard these words, for at that moment, tired of being alone, the child endeavoured to awaken the figure by his side. Of no avail. She was listening to those words that flitted like sunlight across her dreams, earthly sunlight she would see no more. The child, failing to awaken her, sprang upon her breast in

childish play, crying. "Mother, wake up; wake up, mother dear!"—she never woke on this side of the grave. That sudden weight crushed the life from out her frame. When found she was unconscious; she never spoke again. The voice which bade her come had been answered. Weary and heavy laden she had gone to Him, and He had given her rest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOUNT DESERT.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

SUMMER had come once again. All nature was green, and the weather as hot and sultry as it can be in the States. It was evening at Mount Desert, and beneath the verandah of one of the cottages in that lovely spot, sat most of our friends whom we have taken leave of in the preceding chapters. Constance was reclining in an easy-chair, enjoying the homage of her two admirers, the rich one and the poor one. • Charlie Summers was engaged in a mild flirtation with a vivacious girl, who seemed vastly amused at his cheerful conversation; and through the open windows came the glorious notes of Mona's voice. People who were passing stopped to listen. No wonder: it was not often such a sound as that was heard. Sitting alone, solemnly puffing a cigar, was our friend Lord Ringwood, the very personification of luxurious ease, surrounded by cushions, his feet on a stool, his head reposing slightly on one side; while he revelled in the sense of smell in the shape of the beautiful flowers whose perfume filled the air, the sense of taste by means of his fragrant cigar, and the sense of hearing as he listened to that voice

which he knew so well, and whose tones acted so strangely upon his indolent nature.

A lark who's soaring in the sky
Makes music overhead.
An eagle p'raps comes sailing by—
That little lark is dead.

A frog is chirping on the grass,
Rejoicing in the sun ;
A stork may hap that way to pass,
Then froggy's life has run.

A man who self may greatly prize,
Will live for self alone.
Some sudden word—two flashing eyes,
His heart's no more his own,

Thus all is chance for us below,
And yet we plot and plan
The whence we come, the where we go,
Beyond bird, beast or man.

All around was peace, quiet and repose. Even nature herself seemed to revel in the cool, refreshing air of night after the unprecedented heat that had been endured that day.

"Well, Mr. Fern, what are you thinking of?" questioned Constance, after Mona had ceased singing.

"Thinking," said Amos, "well, I don't exactly know, Miss Constance. I guess I wasn't doing

much more than listen. But how is it you are not accompanying your sister this evening?"

"Oh, I only accompany her occasionally, when she has to sing before an audience, as it were; she is singing now more to please herself than for any other reason."

"Well, it pleases me, I can assure you, Miss Mona," said Gerald, addressing himself to that beautiful vision, which now appeared at the open window. And a beautiful vision it was, this fair girl clad in a white Indian muslin gown, made so perfectly that it fitted the outlines of that slender figure like a glove; the front of it loose, trimmed with multitudinous yards of soft lace, which was confined to the waist by a long white bow of watered silk; the same ribbon with streaming ends encircling the throat, while two large yellow roses in the bodice completed the fascination of the toilette of this altogether fascinating picture. No wonder it was some moments before Gerald spoke again; he was gazing at the vision before him in undisguised admiration, and then, as though to relieve his mind, exclaimed, "I love your singing, Miss Mona."

"Really, I am very glad," gazing at him with a smile; "I often wonder what you do like," she added reflectively, "you seem to take life so easily, and so seldom show enthusiasm."

"Enthusiasm," answered the young man, "What is enthusiasm! Only an exaggeration of feeling. One likes a thing, or dislikes it. But I cannot under-

stand gush, or making a fuss about nothing;" he went on, giving vent to an Englishman's inborn dislike of sentiment.

"Yes, that is all very well," replied Mona slowly, "but you lose a great deal by going through life so indifferently. Now I adore music, I dote on singing, but you, you just don't mind it, I suppose, and that is all. What a dreary thing life would be without something to love," she continued in a dreamy kind of way, quite unconscious of what her words might really mean.

"That's just it," said Gerald warmly, "you love things—some *things*, Miss Mona, and I love *people*—some people. And the only things I really love are the things those people do and say."

The girl looked at him with great questioning eyes.

"Yes, you are all alike, I suppose. It's the old story, love: you all decline the verb 'to love,' and everything—kindness, friendship, companionship, all resolves itself into love. What is it, this love that you all make such a fuss about? I love, too, I suppose, at least I love many people; I love my father and mother and sisters; I love several of my friends also, but I do not see anything so extraordinary in that as to talk about it."

Gerald looked at her in wonder. Could such innocence be? "Did no one ever make love to you," he ventured. "Did—did any one ever propose to you?"

"Yes," answered the girl, the colour mounting to her beautiful cheeks. "Just to spoil everything.

Directly I got on well with any one, he always began that kind of nonsense, and made me hate him; I mean for the moment only," she substituted, her eyes happening to light upon Lord Ringwood's recumbent form. "I wish there was no such thing as love; that sort of love, I mean," she exclaimed, impatiently; "it's so vulgar, so coarse and unrefined. It places everyone on the same level; and such a level. It reminds me of a game I had once to play at a children's school feast in England, a game called 'Kiss in the ring.' Do you know it?" she said, raising her eyes towards Gerald.

"Yes, I know it," he laughed; "it isn't such a bad game. Oh, don't look so severe, Miss Mona, I didn't mean, of course, it was a good game; at least, not always"—suddenly recollecting some of those earlier experiences when called upon to treat ugliness as though it were beauty. "But the idea of likening the world to a game of 'Kiss in the ring!' Really, Miss Mona, you are deliciously original. But how awfully shocked some people would be at the idea."

"Shocked!" she said, with a little gasp. "Oh, Mr. Drayton, I didn't mean to say anything shocking;" and to see her standing there, half in light, half in shade, her pure childish face now and again lit up by the fitful light of candles that were burning within the room, it would have been a hard judge indeed who could have accused her of being capable of shocking. Shocking! why, she looked the picture of innocence, the personification of beauty, the

very reflection of simplicity as she stood looking at the young man beside her, waiting for him to tell whether he were shocked at her outspokenness.

Such earnestness amused Gerald : he laughed. "Forgive my laughing, Miss Mona, but the bare idea of you saying anything shocking is so very funny—you are so different from other girls. I never met any one like you before."

"Really," opening her great eyes in wonder, "am I different, Mr. Drayton ?" Why am I different ? Do tell me."

"Oh, well, you are—are—"

"Well," she said, impatiently.

"Are different," he remarked, lamely.

"Well, that of course explains it, Mr. Drayton," laughed Mona. "Really, you are very lucid."

"I am a poor hand at explaining myself, Miss Mona, and that's a fact," he went on—"but you know what I mean, don't you ?"

"Oh, perfectly," she laughed. "I quite understand, and as I am so different, I will begin and alter. Tell me how to start."

"No, no ; not for one moment," he exclaimed ; "don't think of such a thing. You are different because you are perfect, and perfection should never alter."

"Oh, that is the idea you were wrestling with, then, Mr. Drayton. I am perfect, am I ? Oh, thank you,"—with a little courtesy. "I come to you for information and guidance, and all I get is a ridicu-

lous compliment. Yes, perhaps I am different from other girls," she added, with a little half sigh. "I hate compliments. They are such a poor tribute to one's intelligence."

"Oh, come, don't be hard upon me, Miss Mona," said Gerald, contritely, "I didn't mean any harm; but the fact is when I talk to you I always feel a perfect fool. I wish you'd sing again, just to show you bear no malice."

"Forgive you and sing!" smiled Mona; "well, you are not modest in your demands."

"What's that about forgiveness and singing?" came from the depths of the chair that contained Lord Ringwood. "Miss Mona going to sing and forgive?"

"Yes," she said, lightly, turning in the direction of the voice. "What shall it be, Lord Ringwood? Choose. I'll forgive Mr. Drayton, but I'll sing for you."

In this speech there was not the faintest suspicion of coquetry. If any other girl had said this, one might have thought so, but Mona only just meant the words which she spoke. She would forgive Mr. Drayton, if, indeed, there were ought to forgive; and she would sing for Lord Ringwood because she knew that that gentleman really appreciated her singing, while Gerald only cared for it in a general sort of way.

"Oh, sing that little thing you sang once before about forgiveness," said his lordship. "It

will not only be appropriate, but I think it is so pretty."

Without more ado, Mona went to the piano and began :

To some no sweeter sound is heard,
No fairer gift e'er given,
Than that contained in one blest word,
The word which says "forgiven."

When raging anger holds us fast,
Revenge our hearts may harden,
'Tis then we'll blot away the past
With that brief sentence "pardon."

Should fierce regret be dark'ning life,
Should clouds o'er sun be driven,
P'raps *one* might stay this cruel strife
By whispering "forgiven."

Small wonder of the gifts of kings
'Tis monarchs' fairest treasure,
Because the change forgiveness brings
Is change from pain to pleasure.

"I like that; thank you," said Gerald and Ringwood, together, while the rest of the party, who had kept silence during the singing, also expressed their gratitude; and then the conversation went on, as conversations on these occasions do.

Given a warm summer's evening, the country air, a pleasant verandah, lounging chairs, and a com-

pany of young men and beautiful girls; add thereto that subtle charm of music, which can even tame the savage breast, and I think you can pretty well guess the conversation which followed, even as though you had been there. You *have* been there, and I have been there; we have both yielded to the captivation of our senses, and babbled on in words which we should not greatly desire to read next day in type.

Lord Ringwood, lazily smoking, and revelling in that bodily comfort he knew so well how to obtain, was lost in thought. What are the thoughts of such men as he? What are those thoughts in which they roam until they lose their way? Are all their thoughts concentrated on self, or can there float through their minds some passing wave of higher things? Gerald was sitting, talking to Mona; but, in reality, his thoughts were of Constance. Should he ask her to be his wife? Should he risk the loss of cordial friendship by beseeching her to turn that friendship into love? But love—did he really love her? or, rather, should he let himself go on loving a girl with no moral strength; a mercenary woman, who was deliberately throwing herself at the head of the first rich man who came across her path? These were bitter thoughts; but there were times when Gerald felt very bitter towards Constance. Was she, after all, worthy of this sacrifice of self he had offered her? Here was he, still dangling after her, devoted to her, yes, worshipping her; he could not

leave her, he knew it; she was stronger than he, and yet should he still further debase himself, and court refusal by going on his knees before her, only to be thrown over in the end for the sake of another—another she might care for less, but a man with, perhaps, more wealth than he ? Oh, no; the thought was disgusting. No, I have some pride left, Gerald told himself—told himself times out of number, when tempted to do that which his heart would prompt; and yet, poor moth, that pride was not of much account; he could not leave the light, though he could, perhaps, refrain from doing more than singe his wings; but he knew, though he would scarcely acknowledge it to himself, that these wings were so severely burnt he could not fly away; yes, indeed, he perforce must stay—stay and see the girl he loved married to a man because he was rich. Bah ! he sickened at the thought, but—he stayed.

And Constance, talking to the rich man who thus provoked the ire of Gerald, she too had her thoughts, although so prettily smiling, and so sweetly speaking to the man she now addressed. But, like him, her thoughts were not of the person to whom she spoke.

It was Gerald, Gerald Drayton, whose image pervaded her heart, and though she did not seem to listen, not one word of the trifling inanities he now was speaking to her sister but reached her attentive ear. Yes, she owned to herself she loved him. It had dawned upon her so gradually that when she

woke to the fact it fairly startled her; that silent devotion had done its work. So stealthily and so surely had he stolen her heart away that it was gone almost before she herself had been aware. But there it stood; she had called it silent devotion, and so it was—not one word of love had ever passed between them. Why did he not speak? Did he not love her too? But of that there was no doubt. The eyes can speak though the lips be still. But why did he not use his lips and strive to win her if he could? “I’d marry him, thought Constance; yes, I am sure of it, if he came to me, and with all his soul entreated me to be his. How could I stand against him! What would be the thought of riches in a moment such as that! Though, of course, we should have some rude awakening when the first glamour had passed away,” decided her practical mind. “But what of that. The glamour would have conquered, after all, but as it is,”—and here her thoughts made her so angry that she almost pouted at the unconscious Amos—“I can’t go and propose to him. I can’t throw myself at his head”—the very words Gerald had used of her as regards his rival—“and I can’t go on like this; I shall have to marry this man and be miserable for all the remainder of my life.” And here she felt quite pathetic, and cast a look of reproach in the direction of the origin of all this misery; which Gerald, intercepting, as was perhaps intended, interpreted as a signal to cross over to where she sat, and when he came, such is the inconsist-

ency of some women, Constance affected immense surprise, and only said, " Well, what ? "

" What ? what ? " queried Gerald, preparing to seat himself at her side.

" What have you come to say ? "

" What have I come to say " ? he repeated after her. " Why, nothing, of course— at least, nothing particular. "

" Well, then, " laughed Constance, rather pettishly, " if you have only come over here to say nothing, we don't want you; do we, Mr. Fern ? We were having a most delightful tête-à-tête, and we cannot be interrupted at the most interesting point by people who confess they have nothing to add to the conversation; " and here she gave a glance at her companion which made that gentleman beam with satisfaction at this token of his own fascinations, while it caused Gerald to bite his lips and feel inclined to brain him as he sat; but instead of acting in a manner so unconventional, he merely laughed and said:

" Very well, I won't stay if I'm not wanted, Miss Courtown. Two is company, I suppose; " and then he left them; but the breach was widened. He would never have the courage to speak now; it was evident that Mr. Fern had the field, and Mr. Fern thought so too. Thus, as is often the case, by a little personal pique, by a trifling ebullition of temper at a critical moment, we may sometimes frustrate the very things which we would most desire to

bring to pass. "Mary, Mary, quite contrary," has had many imitators. After all, I believe if we had had to choose to whom to listen on that evening, we should have done better to select the conversation of our young friend Charlie Summers.

You see Lord Ringwood is busily lost in thought; Mona is only thinking of how she can get back to the piano, where she can sing alone and unheeded, unpestered by praise and freed from thanks. Constance is cross, and pursuing a path we cannot admire; Gerald is cross, too, but inclined to be bitter, so it is far better to keep out of his way.

Amos alone is smiling sweetly, but then, poor man, he is going so blindly into the web of domestic unhappiness that he hasn't any eyes or ears except for himself and Constance. But Charlie Summers and his vivacious companion are laughing at their own little jokes, and at any rate seem both wide-awake and good-tempered. Charlie is no longer a love-sick youth; he has shaken all that off, though he still thinks tenderly of the days that are gone, whenever those days are connected with the girl he loved. But that one day, that Austerlitz at Goodwood, seems to him now like some hideous dream, when one cannot quite make sure whether it has occurred or not. When riding across the prairies during those long months "out West," he had much time for reflection. The healthful out-door life he led, its regular hours and hard daily work, told its tale, improved his health and gave tone to both body and mind. He

could almost have wondered if he were the same person who had gone through all those phases of emotion during that race, when he staked so high. "How could I have done it?" he marvelled. What an awful cold-blooded plunge it must have been; and how I stood the excitement I really do not understand.

Thus he looked back upon it and reflected as though the principal actor in the scene had been some other than himself. He had heard of Lady Dosia once or twice. She had written to tell him of her engagement, and now she had written to say she was married. It was only a short note:

DEAR CHARLIE.

I married Lord Marcott last week. We have a house in Grosvenor Square, where we shall be this season and most of the autumn. I hope you will be in England and able to call upon us, and have some talks over old times. You won't mind dining with us, as the cook is an artist *de la première classe*.

Yours, very sincerely,

DOSIA MARCOTT.

P. S.—Don't think too badly of me.

No, he would not think badly of her. She had but followed out her destiny. Brought up in the lap of luxury, and taught that she was destined to do well for herself, matrimonially, she had not disappointed that destiny, but married a rich peer, an oldish one, it is true, but one cannot expect to have everything.

"Poor Dosia," he thought, "it's just as well we

didn't do anything foolish. Supposing she had bolted with me, how she would have hated me by now! But it will be very jolly seeing her again," he reflected, "and I certainly will go there the moment I get back."

By all of which it will be seen that Charlie was on the way to being cured, and that he was not going about with a long face, sad to behold. He had invested some money in a ranch, and had not done badly. His was just the sort of nature to get on "out West ;" fearless and outspoken, generous and kind, people had taken to him at once. His riding alone won him many friends, and the free out-of-door life pleased and charmed him so greatly that he used to wonder how he had ever consented to lead a perpetual round of London and London existence, only tempered with a little shooting or varied with a few weeks' hunting. But if, in those days, any one had proposed his giving up such a life to lead the one in which he now took delight, I suppose, as others at this moment would do, he also would have scoffed at the idea of neglecting the flesh-pots of an Englishman's Egypt for the trial of fresh fields and pastures new.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TENNIS MATCH.

THE next day was one of great excitement, because on that date was to be played the final tie of a Lawn Tennis Tournament. One of the two in this tie was no other than our friend Gerald. For the tournament there had been numerous entries among the many people now staying at this favourite resort.

"There isn't an Englishman playing," commented Constance when one day the subject was broached, "Can't either of you play?" she said, turning to Charlie Summers and Gerald, who were standing by.

"Well I'm not much of a hand at it," said the former.

"I used to play a bit," answered Gerald, "but I don't suppose I am any good now—besides which I am in such bad training; good dinners and late hours have done their work."

"Oh, nonsense," she insisted, "you must have a try, I want to come and look at you; but don't get beaten."

"Very well," said the obedient Gerald, "anything to please you, Miss Constance; I'll enter my name,"

which he did, with the result that he had won all his first ties, and now stood at the finish to play for the cup. No one was more astonished at this success than Gerald himself, although no one but himself knew that it was mainly owing to sheer dogged pluck that he had got into the finals. The rest of the men were for the greater part younger than he—mere boys, most of them, and in tolerably good condition—whereas, Gerald had scarcely taken any exercise for months, and would get so blown that he could have almost laid down and given up the contest; but a Briton, when he sets his teeth, is a long way from giving in, and Gerald set his teeth, stuck to it and played sturdily on, with the above result. How many shandy-gaffs, brandies and sodas, and other mixtures he swallowed when it was all over I should be sorry to have to recount; but he needed them; for when a man is not in training he requires something to keep him going, and replace the amount of strength which he takes out of himself by his exertions.

Poor Gerald had had to stand much chaff, on account of his various victories; but he bore it all with the good-nature which was part of himself. "Really," Ringwood would say, "my dear boy, you quite made me hot to look at you. I never saw a fellow such a colour in all my life; I positively had to go away and refresh myself, and do my best to forget your appearance; and you looked so anxious, too, I felt quite sorry for you. I kept thinking of a look I had once

observed in the face of a hunted hare, which haunted me for weeks."

"Well," laughed Gerald, "you'd have looked anxious if you were four games behind, as I was, and felt, besides, as if you hadn't a spare breath in your body."

"That's the part which astonished me," chimed in Charlie. "You had such a lot of spare breath, which kept coming from between your clenched teeth as though you were a steam-engine. Why, I felt the draught from where I sat; you were panting over the court like a sort of peripatetic whirlwind; and as for the pace at which you went, why, I would never have given you credit for such surprising agility."

"Leave him alone," would interpose Constance, for once taking his side, at which Gerald gave her a look of gratitude. "You know neither of you could have done half so well; and I think your performance a very fine one, Mr. Drayton."

"Which quite enables me to bear with equanimity all chaff on the part of these two lazy spectators," replied Gerald. "It's all very well to chaff, you two," he went on, "but you don't know what heat is till you get run off your legs, as I was yesterday."

"No, nor thirst, either, I should think," said Ringwood. "Why, I used to think that three brandies and sodas required a tolerable amount of swallow, but you got rid of six, at least I noticed

six, and then I lost count ; how many were there, old chap ?" he added, insinuatingly.

"Oh, he couldn't tell you," put in Charlie ; "Gerald is no good at arithmetic. I believe he puts all the brandies on the top line and then proceeds to subtract the sodas, the answer being the amount he has consumed ; by this means he has passed a tolerably temperate afternoon."

"Well, that's not bad, as a wrinkle," laughed the poor maligned tennis player. "Really, Charlie, one would almost suppose you were speaking from your own experience."

"Oh, my experience was," said Charlie, "that I used to look upon my thirst as something separate from myself, and what it did had absolutely nothing to do with me. It went its own way and I went mine."

"Very convenient," remarked Ringwood, "especially if it led you into its own path—the path which took it to the bar."

"Really," interrupted Constance, "you people seem to know a great deal about thirst ; why, I should recommend you to adopt the American plan."

"The American plan, what is that ?" said Charlie.

"Why, to drink iced water."

"Yes," ejaculated Ringwood, "at meals ; between the meals, cocktails *ad lib.*"

"I hate iced water at meals," continued Charlie ; "it seems to freeze all I eat, causing my interior to

become a kind of petrifying well, which is far from pleasant."

"Yes, the little man goes on strike," said Gerald.

"What little man? Whose little man?" asked Constance.

"Oh, I forgot; it's an idea of my own," he added, laughing. I believe in a theory that there presides over one's internal economy a neat little gentleman in a white cap. Everything that comes to hand he stows away on its proper shelf. If you eat too fast he hasn't time, so just chucks up the job and sulks, consequently there arrives indigestion. If you eat strange food there is of course no shelf with a ready-made label for that food; therefore, it lies about in a homeless manner; but if you suddenly swallow iced water in large quantities the poor little chap may very likely catch a chill, which incapacitates him from doing any work, for several hours at least. This may cause you immense inconvenience."

Everyone laughed at this droll theory; then Ringwood said:

"'There was a little man, and he had a little gun,' I mean cap, 'and he wore it on his head, head, head;' but your little man," turning to Gerald, "is dead, dead, dead."

"Why dead?"

"Dead as a door nail; poor chap died of drowning long, long ago."

"Oh, no," laughed Gerald; "he learnt swimming in his youth, and took to brandy and soda as a duck

does to water; but it is water, iced water, which he fears as the burnt child fears the fire. But really, bar chaff, don't you think mine a good idea—this idea of the little gentleman?"

"Yes, I guess it's good," said Charlie with a nasal twang. "But I guess he feels real mean, that chippy chappie, when he has to get up in the morning."

"Well, I hope he isn't badly now," laughed Constance, as they approached the tennis ground and found that it was time for their champion to go and commence the match.

There was a great crowd. A "gallery" already waiting, a "gallery" that was anxious for the other side to win, for he was a popular and well-known candidate, while Gerald was a foreigner and comparative stranger. The other side was represented by a young man of some twenty years, tall and rather good-looking; he had a childish face, the kind of a countenance which will at once enlist the sympathies of a bystander.

I think it was "Augustus," who "was a chubby lad." I don't know what was the name of this particular tennis-playing youth, but that of Augustus would have been excessively appropriate, as he was, without doubt, inclined to be chubby, though in the pink of training and as fit as a fiddle.

Umpires were selected; a scorer, bursting with importance, clearing his throat for the occasion and giving his voice a preliminary canter in its most

guttural notes, which, needless to say, ended in the inevitable manner, finally proceeded to take his seat at one end of the net.

"Just toss me over a ball," cried the young American, "I want to try the bounce."

And Gerald, taking one, lightly hit it into the court of his adversary.

While the scorer and the players are all three engaged in their several preliminaries, let us take a look at the two men whom so many people have gathered together to watch.

The young American, as I said before, was good-looking, tall and well knit together; albeit there was just a little too much fat to please the critics most captious on the score of condition. He wore a blue Oxford shirt, a blue tie, and a blue cricket belt with brass buckle; the kind of girdle which one used to see in England about the time when our grandfathers had just ceased to play cricket arrayed in tall hats and braces. Knickerbockers, or, rather, a cross between what are called knickerbockers and breeches, came next. Charlie declared they were the former, but Ringwood asserted that any fool could see they were breeches; whereat, Charlie told him that, consequently, being anything but foolish, he considered them as knickerbockers. Constance said they were, of course, knickerbockers, which settled the point. A pair of blue stockings of the same colour as the belt and the shirt were the next articles; and, at the end of all, were a couple of exces-

sively neat shoes. I forgot the other end. On his head the player wore a blue and white cap. Altogether, it was a very creditable turn-out. And a lady next to Charlie was so moved to enthusiasm at the sight, that she declared to her companion, in a stage whisper, that she would "love to kiss him."

"I wish she'd take me as a substitute," laughed Charlie, after having passed this information on to Constance.

"Serve you both right if she did," remarked Ringwood; with which Constance, who had turned round to look at the lady in question, and looking at the wrong one, a demure-looking old frump, with curls, quite agreed.

On the other side of the net stood Gerald, tall, well built and also good-looking, but with a different kind of beauty to the chubby Augustus, his adversary. His frame was well set up, as though he had been drilled in his youth; he wore his fair curly hair close cropped to his head, which was covered by a Zingari cap; his age seemed greater by force of contrast, and he looked all his eight and twenty years. And have I ever told you that he had blue eyes, fair complexion and a small golden moustache? He was dressed in white; white flannel shirt, white sash and white trousers—a pair of trousers he rather fancied, for he used to say that when a man played tennis or cricket before a crowd he owed it as a duty to get himself up as well as he could, therefore he instructed his tailors to see that his "flannels" were

always beyond reproach. Could those tailors or the wearer but have overheard a remark that reached the attentive ear of Charlie, and which that listener treasured up to retail after the match! "Why, what baggy pants," quoth a spectator; "they are quite indecent, they are like women's clothes." On hearing this, Charlie hugged himself with delight, and it was as much as he could do to keep from rushing up to Gerald to repeat the same forthwith; however, he refrained, and at that moment, the players having tossed for choice of courts, the game began.

"Augustus,"—I must call him Augustus, as I do not know his real name—won the toss, and, going into the middle of the ground he gazed wisely towards the sun, then crossing over to the other side, gave another knowing look in the same direction, then one look towards "the gallery," as though for approbation or guidance; but it was too early for applause, and the point had to be decided alone. After a meditative silence he said, "I'll take this court;" therefore Gerald gained the service, and crossing over to the other side he began.

"Fault one," shouted the scorer, his throat in real fine trim as the ball went flying into the net. The next proved an easy one, and Augustus, walking up to it with the greatest composure, just waited till Gerald had started off to cover the other side of the court, and then with beautiful precision landed the ball exactly upon the spot he had that moment vacated.

"Love, fifteen," roared the throat.

Crossing over to the other court, Gerald served again; this time with greater accuracy. The ball struck the ground and shot away in an impossible manner.

"Fifteen all."

Now the game had begun in good earnest, and every stroke was watched with the keenest interest.

To look at, the Englishman was the best player, for he dashed about, getting up balls which appeared almost out of his reach; while the American, having a splendid eye, just strolled about the service line and smashed down everything that came within his court. The difficulty was to get anything past him: if Gerald tried to put the ball on one side, he let his arm go out like a telescope, which resulted in the ball flying back with the speed of lightning; if he changed his tactics and tried to lob the ball over his head, he only managed to put it far beyond the base line out of court. Nevertheless the game was pretty even, and the throat was able to announce, "Three all!" Then Gerald went adrift.

The next two games fell to Augustus. "Three, five, Augustus wins," was the score, when Gerald again got the service. He was pretty done now, and at the steam-engine trick, as Charlie had described it; but that individual shouted, "Now then, old chap, up with her; the eyes of England are upon you, my boy." Gerald heard him, and it seemed to set him

going, for taking the ball, he just served the game right off the reel

"Love game," shouted the voice, and as Augustus began to serve "five—four." The next game, too, fell to Gerald; his spirt had slightly disconcerted the chubby one, who evidently played better when he was ahead. "Five all." This was exciting, and our three friends nearly rose from their seats so great was their interest in the game.

"By Jove! this licks cock-fighting," remarked Charlie.

"One of your dead-heats," replied Ringwood, with a smile.

"Ah, the race isn't over yet; our horse will never stay the distance, I fear."

Words of ill-omen. At that moment Gerald seemed to grow slack; he had made his effort when called upon, and caught his adversary, but that was all he could do; the final burst beat him; one ball he put out of court, the next, trying to smash, he hit into the net.

"Thirty, love," recorded the scorer.

"Forty, love," as Gerald missed an easy half volley in the right-hand corner. The next stroke he stuck to with a tenacity worthy of his race. Right over his head his adversary lobbed the ball; back darted Gerald, and amidst a round of applause he managed to reach it and return it from whence it came; hard down, smash, it came flying back; then, by a miracle almost, he got to it and made a stroke right on

to the base line of the opposite court. Augustus was there as soon as the ball, and as Gerald rushed in to get a volley on its return, he lobbed it once more over his head. Gerald turned, hoping to see the ball fall out of court. Vain hope; bang in the middle of the base line it pitched.

"Game and set !" roared the voice.

Thus Augustus won the first set.

"Bravo, old chap! well played, though," cried Charlie, as Gerald passed them on his way to the other court. "Here, drink this," he added, producing a brandy and soda he had managed to procure during the course of the game. Gerald was too pumped to speak; he took the glass, first holding it up towards his antagonist, but he too was being refreshed, and then, giving one great gulp, the glass was empty.

"Poor little man; hope he's got his life belt on," exclaimed Ringwood; and Gerald, shaking his bat at him for answer, proceeded to take his place to continue the game.

The next set was a one-sided affair. Whether Augustus was tired or whether the brandy lent a fictitious strength to the Englishman, I cannot tell, but certain it is that it was a runaway match. Gerald got the start and was never collared, coming romping past the post a winner by three lengths—I mean six games to three.

"Set all !" roared the voice.

The owner of that voice certainly deserved a

medal, but I think he had some reward, for was he not the centre of an admiring throng, and did he not feel that all that throng were hanging on his words? the players being nowhere by comparison. How easy it is for a self-satisfied, important-feeling man to be happy!

The next set was also Gerald's. His adversary very evidently could not play a losing game. Some of the rounds, though, were simply glorious, Gerald playing as though aware that it was incumbent upon him to make hay while the sun shone. His strength could not last for ever, and now while his adversary had got his tail down was the equivalent to the shining of the sun. So he played like a demon—or, rather, as demons are supposed to play—for I don't really believe that demons ever do play at lawn tennis, but even if they did, and that in their most demoniacal manner, I would not myself mind entering for their tournament if they allowed me, as a mortal, the odds of half fifteen.

Brilliant play characterised this set, rounds of applause greeted a fine stroke made by Augustus at the back of the court; this seemed to give those blue legs new life, and for the next three games both men really played in rare form—now they volleyed at the net, now they lobbed in the air, now they retired to the back line and varied the monotony by endeavouring to place the ball, on either side; each seemed to have his eye in, and neither made a mistake.

"It will be a match of lasting, after all," declared Charlie; "if so, Gerald will be beat."

"Don't believe it," said Ringwood, "I fancy the chubby one is pretty blown, and I'll back Gerald to stick to it as long as he can stand straight; what do you say, Miss Constance?"

"Oh, don't expect me to answer," said that young lady, "I'm too excited to speak—bravo Gerald!" she cried, quite forgetting the Mr. Drayton in her excitement, as Gerald, getting fairly hold of one, smashed it as though his life depended upon the blow. All efforts of the American were vain: game after game he contested with a pluck which taxed all his nerve and all his strength, but Gerald had got a start and he could not catch him.

"Set! Two sets to one, Mr. Drayton wins!" roared the voice, amidst a long round of applause. Once more they crossed, and once again the game began. Both players showed signs of distress, and their respective appearance, of which at the commencement they had felt so proud, had somewhat suffered in the contest. The blue shirt was draggled, the blue cap was all awry, thanks to the speed at which those blue legs had carried them, and as for Gerald, his face was a colour perfectly frightful to behold; but doggedly he played on.

The next set did not take long; it was now Augustus's turn to score. The applause came loud and frequent, and at each successive clap the American seemed to gather fresh strength.

"Go it, old fellow," shouted a voice; "you've got him beat, keep him moving," and he did; Gerald was kept moving, he was playing well, but the pace was clearly telling upon him now. In that set he only managed to get two games, and those were the result of a convulsive effort at the beginning; after that he seemed to realise that it was no good pumping himself further—the set was practically over—he had better husband the remainder of his strength for the final struggle in the next. Having thus resolved, his play fell off, and Charlie exclaimed, "He's chucked it."

"Not a bit of it," said Ringwood. "I see through his little game: he's only foxing; he's just saving himself for the finish, that's all; wait a bit, get a drink ready for him when he crosses over."

"Two sets all," roared the scorer, as Augustus, neatly placing a cross stroke upon the line, ended the set in his favour.

Now there was applause—every one clapped—this was tennis; they were getting their money's worth; people had feared that the Englishman would have no show, it would be a one-sided affair, and scarcely worth coming to see, and lo and behold! those who had stayed away had missed one of the best things of the season. So they applauded.

"Can you stay?" asked Charlie, anxiously, as Gerald passed them once more.

"Think so," he gasped, "unless we play vantage games; if that happens, throw up the sponge."

"Mr. Drayton, I want you to win, but don't overdo it," said Constance kindly. "It's no use making yourself ill for a game of tennis."

"Oh, I'm all right," he answered. "I sha'n't get ill, only I'm so fat and short of breath."

"Play!" shouted the umpire, and the fifth and final set began. Gerald led off with two games, but the American was not to be outdone, and by some brilliant play he secured the next two. The succeeding games also went to one side; thus Gerald won the following two, making him "four—two." Now, he felt, was the time for an effort, only two more games to win; he strained every nerve, placed every ball; it was useless; that accurate arm took everything before it reached the ground, smashing the balls in regular Renshaw fashion, and driving his adversary right out of court; and Gerald, standing outside beyond the base line, returned the balls in a wonderfully clever manner, all in vain; those smashes beat him, and the next three games went to Augustus.

"Five—four;" the American only wanted one more game. Among the spectators the excitement was now intense. The Englishman had made a wonderful stand, but he was beat.

"Never say die," shouted Charlie. "Stick to it, Gerald."

There was no answer, but Gerald heard him. He stopped for one moment; taking a towel, he mopped his face, tightened the sash round his waist, and then he was ready—ready to do his very utmost in a

game, as he would have been at any supreme moment of life—and his utmost succeeded insomuch as the next game was concerned. The rallies were long, the play on both sides remarkable; the American struggled his gamest to prevent the necessity of a vantage set, but Gerald was not to be denied. Wherever the ball was smashed, there was he; back it went to be smashed again perhaps, but all to no purpose, the bat was ready for it on the other side, and this hard fought game was won.

“Five all!” cried the scorer. And now, as every one knows, one of the combatants would be obliged to get two consecutive games to win. Gerald at first seemed to have it all his own way. His opponent appeared completely collared. The next game he won, and almost the next, at least the score stood at “forty—thirty;” then he lost a stroke and it was deuce. By a mighty effort he made it vantage, and then, but one more point and the match would be won—but that point he never got.

It was now his antagonist's turn to clench his teeth, and luck helped him, for Gerald dashed in to get to a short one, which, had he reached, he must inevitably have killed, as Augustus was away at the back of the court; but whether he was tired and did not sufficiently lift his feet, or whether he slipped upon the grass, he himself could never tell, but certain it is, he tripped and fell, stumbling headlong into the net. The point was lost and the score stood at deuce once more.

From that moment Gerald hadn't a chance; the prize had been, as it were, in his grasp and now it was dashed away. His want of condition told; he had fought up to the last moment, he had pulled himself together for that effort, but he could not now make another. He lost the game, and then the next and the next. The American had won and the match was over.

Loud applause greeted the conclusion of the game, which had been so interesting to watch, and the young American sprang over the net, and, as the custom is, shook Gerald warmly by the hand—very warmly, I imagine, if appearance be any index of a person's temperature. Personally, I dislike this hand-shaking business; but it is, perhaps, right to do it; for it looks well, and enables the public to go away with the same sort of comfortable feeling that one may obtain at the conclusion of a novel, when everyone is described as living happy ever afterwards.

"Poor old chap," said Charlie, soothingly, "I wish you'd won."

"Never expected to," gasped the "poor old chap," in answer; "did better than I expected. So awfully pumped, by Jove! I *am* dead beat."

"Now, put on your coat," said Constance, with kindly solicitude. "Don't sit down like that without it, you will catch cold; and, then, what should we do?"

"Would you mind?" whispered Gerald, his breath returning to him.

"Yes, of course I should," replied Constance, blushing slightly.

"It's awfully good of you," he went on; "but tell me, Miss Constance, why you wanted me to win?"

"Why? Oh, because we are friends, I suppose," she answered, without hesitation.

"Nothing more?" he whispered.

"Very well, then," said Constance, with a look round, to see if they could be overheard, "supposing I say because we are such very good friends."

"Thank you," he said; "it might have been less, but, Miss Constance, perhaps some day it may possibly be more; at any rate, I don't now regret having lost the match."

So saying, he turned to go: but Constance called him back, and speaking rather hurriedly, as though half ashamed of what she was going to say:

"Mr. Drayton, do you remember that day at Lynn-year, when we were picking roses together, and I wanted you to say I was always right?"

"Perfectly. Why?"

"Because," she said, slowly, looking straight before her; "you promised me that you would say I was right not only then, but always. Is that so?"

"Yes," replied Gerald, "I will keep my word; you are always right."

"Very well, then; to-morrow remember this conversation. Now, good-night," she exclaimed, in her usual voice, "I must be going. Mrs. Pennell is to drive me home, and there she is, waiting

for me." And nodding to Lord Ringwood and Charlie, she was gone.

The next day it was announced that Miss Constance Courtown was engaged to Mr. Fern.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOLLARS AND SENSE.

MISS COURTOWN was engaged to Mr. Amos L. Fern. That set the tongues wagging; that caused the idlers to gossip and the jealous to cavil. "Why, he was *the* match, *the* millionaire, and that little flirt had hooked him. What could he see in her? Why did he do it? Well, he looked a fool, and now he had proved his appearance right," said some; while others declared "she was too good for him. How could a girl like that throw herself away upon an empty-headed noodle; she must have been in love with some one else, and was doing this out of pique, etc., etc.," in fact, all the things that could be said, were said, when this announcement was first given out. Gerald heard the news and was silent. Astonishment—indignation—grief, all rose up within him. Why had she done this? True, he had expected as much, but, however much we may expect a blow, yet is it always unexpected when it comes. He was right then, she was a mercenary girl. A girl who married a man for whom she did not care, solely on account of his riches. Then he knew the meaning of her words of last night; her words of long ago: "would he remember that he had once

said, she was always right." Right ! Yes, she was right, he thought, if it were right to run after this world's goods and sell oneself for gold. No idea of Constance loving Mr. Fern, ever entered into his mind. No, he knew that could not be; and he knew also—how could he help it ?—that had Constance to declare whether she loved Mr. Fern or himself, the answer would be, himself, Gerald, and yet, knowing this, she had deliberately left him for ever, for that other man whom she could neither love, honour, nor care for. Oh, it was horrible ! horrible ! he told himself, and yet it never entered his head that he may also have been to blame and that his own dallying with fate, and policy of hesitation, had in a manner hastened on the very event which he now deplored. Well, he would not see her again—that he could not, would not do—he should only say something for which he would be sorry, some remark which in future he might regret. And so, giving business as his excuse, he packed his portmanteau, and left for New York; from thence he wrote to Constance a little letter of congratulation: "he wished to congratulate her upon her engagement, and hoped she would be happy in her choice;" and signed himself her sincere friend, Gerald Drayton.

"Fool !" cried Constance, as she read it. "I suppose he is angry, furious with me even, but it is all his fault, and he is thinking, I suppose, that I am the one to blame. Well, such is fate; he hopes I shall be happy. Yes, I *will* be happy. I shall have

as much money as I want, and if that is not happiness I don't know what is;" and she smiled a bitter smile.

You see, all along Constance had thought a great deal more of Mr. Fern's dollars than of himself, and here she was on the very morning after her engagement, almost forgetting that there was such a person as Amos in the case. But Amos did not forget himself, in fact he came out well in his hour of triumph. He rained presents upon his fiancée, and was sufficiently clever not to thrust too much of his own company upon her. He, too, went to New York, but his visit was to ransack the shops for articles fitting to bestow upon his future wife. Thus he played his trump card, and scarcely let a day go past without in some manner reminding her of the dollars she so loved, binding fast the golden chain with which he had lured and captured this poor dazzled bird. The marriage was to be soon, as soon as possible. In this both Mr. Courtown and Mr. Fern were at one. The former feared his daughter; she was so independent, so unreliable, any day she might take it into her head to change her mind. Constance herself had no objection; might not she, too, some day be inclined to go back on her promise, and change her mind as to the desirability of possessing a fortune hampered with such an owner? Then, if at any moment there should appear a flaw in that fortune, should its acquisition begin to pall, or the owner thereof chance to act with less than


his usual caution and tact, she felt that she might cry off and return to poverty and freedom. And, therefore, she too was anxious for an early date for the consummation of this contract.

To this end she met her father and her mother half way. The latter had *carte blanche* concerning the trousseau, and to her delight found that Constance entered into the procuring of this necessary outfit with the greatest zest, and took an interest in all that pertained to it as keen as any that she herself felt on this all-important occasion. What a talk there was of chiffons, gowns and dresses, dresses and gowns! even the papers spoke of them, and society made its comments. A man of Mr. Fern's wealth did not every day select a bride. Therefore, when he did so the occasion was almost public property, and the public had the right to gloat over all the details of the arrangements of such property, and they did gloat. This gloating was a nine days' wonder; people talked of nothing else, and there were some among that small captious minority who cannot see what there is in a wedding--somebody else's wedding--to cause so much fuss, who secretly longed and wished "that this all-pervading couple would get married and done for and settled right away." I cannot personally understand their feelings, being scarcely able to conceive anything more agreeable as a subject of conversation than the details of a bridal trousseau, nor believe there could be more interesting reading in one's morning paper than whole columns of description;

description of a lady's garments, be they under or be they upper. At least, I say so, whatever I may think, for I strive to go with the times, and whenever a royal lady is married I follow the popular taste, and pore over my paper which contains her list of clothes, with as much interest as though I were perusing something which in reality entertained me greatly. In America, indeed, the newspapers revel in clothes—bridal clothes. Why, did not the wife of the President herself have lots of clothes! And I revel in my newspaper, whatever the contents may be.

Thus everyone knew that Constance was going to possess so many gowns from Worth, and so many hats from the same capital which has the honour to shelter this distinguished artist. Boots and shoes, too, came from Paris, gloves from Paris, and in such profusion—a rough calculation showed that to give each pair a chance she must live at least a score of years. Fancy a score of years without having to buy new gloves! No, I don't believe it would be appreciated. Think of the wrench of having to buy the first pair twenty years hence. I verily believe the bride of twenty years ago would rather prefer to send the old ones to be cleaned. And then the linen! Ah! what immense quantities. The future Mrs. Fern was really having a trousseau worthy of the exalted position which she was called upon to fill. All these details and many more served to while away the few months that were to elapse before the mar-

riage took place. Constance went about it all with a sort of feverish pleasure. Yes, dresses gave her pleasure, and quantities of linen alone produced a kind of delight. It wasn't exactly the quantities which she loved, it was the feeling that, however much she had, or whatever she wanted, would make no difference at all in the future when she drew upon a bank as solid and as high as Amos's historical pile. She little thought, in those days, that when she married, all the trousseau to be taken away with her would be as much as could be contained in a little hand-bag. Well, it is lucky one cannot look into the future. At this moment, at any rate, Constance lived in an atmosphere of flowers. Amos was an adept in the art of selecting flowers, and were she wedded to the taste of "candies," she might have eaten of these dainties, morning noon and night, without making the least impression upon those vast packages with which the loving care of Amos had surrounded her. But think what a possession Constance was, at this time, to her friends. Think what a resource for all the women of her acquaintance; just picture to yourself a girl whom you could go and see, and talk to about her wedding, a girl who could show you a trousseau which had been gathered together from every country of Europe, and while you gazed and gloated, you could feast on "candies" and revel in flowers. Oh, yes, Constance certainly was a precious boon, a friend worthy of the name, and her popularity at this



time was as great as that of any girl has ever been before.

The day drew on, Gerald had gone West to visit his friend Charlie Summers, Lord Ringwood had returned to England; and Constance had no friends of the other sex for whom she particularly cared, excepting of course her Amos, and whether she really cared for him or not, I leave it for you to judge; but certain it is that Amos was having it all his own way. There was not a rival in the field. Constance was not happy, she was restless and unsettled, a look of unnatural excitement pervaded her whole frame; she never seemed to let herself be still, as though fearing the thoughts which might ensue. In those days she was drawn very close to Mona. Now and again a feeling of sadness would come over her; a feeling that she was not doing the best for herself, and that her better nature was being overthrown by the bad. These moments left her mournful and depressed, and then it was that the unspeakable comfort of the companionship of that lovely girl was like balm to her troubled mind.

"Dearest, are you happy?" Mona would ask her.

"Yes, I suppose so," came the somewhat unsatisfactory reply.

"You suppose so only! Oh, if you are not happy, why do you do it?" sighed Mona.

"Why, do what?"

"Why, marry Mr. Fern. Don't you love him, Constance ?"

At which Constance gave a little hard laugh, scarcely indicative of a very great amount of adoration for the husband of her choice.

"Give it up," urged Mona, "break it off; I will help you."

"Never !" exclaimed Constance; "it is impossible now, things have gone too far. Papa would be so angry. And think of what people would say. No: I must go through with it now."

And Mona could only sigh. This innocent, loving girl could not understand the arguments her sister brought to bear against her. What was passing before her eyes was too great a puzzle for her to comprehend. It did not seem to her possible that Constance could dislike a man, and yet propose to marry him.

Such a thought was absurd. But why, then, was she so sad at times, so downcast and so unlike her merry self? She could not answer. Something was wrong, it must have something to do with this intended marriage; if this marriage were making her sister sad, then surely her sister must break it off, and so she urged her to do so. But Constance only shook her head, saying she had gone too far now, and must go through with it.

Thus things went on their course till two days before the wedding. Everything was in readiness, even the cake was in course of construction, and the

pent-up curiosity of months was near being realised. How women love a wedding! and when a wedding is broken off, they chatter as though robbed of lawful prey. But two days now, and Constance would become Mrs. Fern.

That day Constance had been more than usually sad, and after luncheon, finding Mona alone, she threw her arms around her neck and burst into tears.

"What is it, darling?" she asked in her beautiful, caressing tones. "What is it, sister? Tell me, and I will help you."

"Oh, it's dreadful," sobbed Constance, "it's more than I can bear. I can't, I won't, and I sha'n't," wherewith she burst into a fresh paroxysm of weeping.

"No, you sha'n't do anything you don't like, dear," said Mona, soothingly. "What is it? tell me, and I will see you don't do it."

"I can't marry Mr. Fern," sobbed Constance, "and oh! I don't know how to say so. I can't get out of it, and yet I *will*."

"Oh," said Mona, rather aghast, "this certainly was very serious." Then she added, "Well, dear, it is better now than when it is too late. You shall not marry Mr. Fern. No one can *make* you marry Mr. Fern. But why can't you do it?" as though it suddenly dawned upon her that Constance had left it rather till the last minute to make up her mind on so important a subject, and if she really disliked it

so much as she asserted, how was it she had let things go on so long !

"Could *you* marry him ?" said Constance, raising her tear-stained face towards her sister.

"Could *I*," exclaimed Mona, taken aback. "No, dear; no, certainly not. But then, I don't love him."

"*Love* him !" echoed Constance. "Do you suppose that *I* love him ? Oh, Mona," she cried wildly, "get me out of it. Save me. Help me, and, darling, I will never cease to be grateful during the whole course of my life."

"There, there," said Mona soothingly. "I'll do it for you, dear. *I* will tell papa. Now you go and lie down, and *I* will see that you are not worried."

The next morning the papers contained the announcement that the marriage of Miss Constance Courtown and Mr. Amos L. Fern would not take place.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AMOS IN LONDON.

I HAVE said sufficient of the notice which this engagement had aroused, to show that the excitement consequent upon its rupture would be intense. If the engagement had been a nine days' wonder, this abrupt termination was an eighteen days of perpetual marvel. So much so, and so much talk was there, thereupon, that to escape the unpleasant publicity attached to the case, Mr. Courtown decided to despatch his family to England, to get them away from the remarks of busybodies and the prying eyes of gossip-mongers and lovers of scandal. Therefore, when we next again meet our friends they are once more living in London. Constance is a different being; all her old cheerfulness has returned, and she is almost happy—almost, only, for there is one person whom she loves, she knows it now, and he is absent. Gerald Drayton is still in America. He is still staying with Charlie Summers, "out West." Some of his friends had endeavoured to persuade him to go home and marry the girl whom he so nearly had lost. They told him that he it was for whom she had thrown over Mr. Fern. Some of Constance's own friends even begged him to go home

and try his chance, for it was an open secret that Gerald was desperately in love with the heroine of last summer's engagement wonder. But no, he would not. When Gerald got an idea into his head, it stuck there; and he could be as obstinate as you please. Constance was a mercenary girl, and she had thrown him over for a rich man, for whom she did not care. He did not stop to tell himself that a girl can't well throw over a man till that man has proposed to her. But when a man is wounded, or fancies himself wounded, in his pride, you cannot expect him to be erring on the side of justice. It is true, he told himself he loved Constance; yes, always had and always should; but he wasn't going to let her make a fool of him for all that; and he respected himself too much to run after any girl who had behaved as Constance Courtown had behaved to him. Thus it will be seen that these two curiously constructed people were farther apart than ever—indeed, so very far apart that once more the wide Atlantic Ocean was rolling between them.

What a dreadful rock is pride, and how many human hearts will shipwreck thereon! Lucky it is for those who go down to the sea in ships, that those much maligned waters do not, indeed, teem with rocks as many or as dangerous as some natures do with pride. Were that so, the list of total wrecks would be appalling in its magnitude.

Well, Amos wasn't going to shipwreck. Unlike Gerald, he weathered his pride, and went

down to the sea in a ship—a ship which conveyed him in excellent safety right over to the “other side.” On the “other side,” he went to London, and in London he met Constance. Was he embarrassed? Not in the slightest. He was just as usual; only more so. I mean, more polite, if possible, and more generous with his gifts. This latter was not difficult, for the costly ones had been all returned, and he was now confined to a fresh distribution of “candies,” and of flowers. True, as London is not great at the former commodity, the boxes thereof had to be procured in Paris. But that was a trifling expense to a person who, only a few months ago, had made presents of diamonds and pearls.

Constance did not quite know what to make of this fresh token of Mr. Fern's perseverance in the pursuit of an object he loved. But her parents were overjoyed at such a proof that the golden prize had not yet been lost, and that he was nibbling anew at their own beautiful bait.

Mr. Fern's “attentions” attracted great notice in London, where “attentions” are seldom capable of being described as magnificent. Now, to the London world, Mr. Fern appeared as the typical American millionaire, and his “attentions” were worthy of all they had attributed to that class of individual. His expenditure of dollars reminded them of half-forgotten passages in Monte Christo, and there was no doubt but that his “attentions” to Miss

Courtown were magnificent. Now, English people like riches, more particularly if those riches are owned by a foreigner. If the individual who rolls in wealth is a fellow-countryman, then to take him up and make much of him, on account of that wealth, may lay themselves open to remark. People may even be sufficiently ill-natured to say that the object of their adulation is a *parvenu* and a vulgarity, whom they are only running after for the sake of his money; but a foreigner—that is different. Everyone ought to be civil to a stranger; and if he happens to be rich, well—*tant mieux*—that's not your affair; besides which, a millionaire is always a great personage in America, and is it not owed to the reciprocity of hospitality to do all in one's power for a great personage who hails from the "other side" !

Thus it was that Amos became known. Everyone had heard of him, and Amos was equal to the occasion. People began to run after him, and he gave them something to run for; he gave them food. Yes, food of the most *recherché* kind, and wine of the very best brands; and the places where he gave that food and wine were Richmond, Greenwich, Hurlingham, and other resorts where men and women love to fly to escape the heat of a London sun, and slake their thirst in the cool of the evening beneath the shade of overhanging trees; a thirst that is none the less severe, inasmuch as its assuaging is defrayed by the kindness of another. And then Amos had a steam-launch on the river, and a yacht at Cowes.

Yes, he knew his way about. He went racing and dropped a lot of money; people who liked to pick up money as it dropped, quite pursued him. And the young men got wind of Amos; the young men who ornament the windows of the club, and loll against the walls of a London ball-room, they heard of Amos, and they too followed him. Fancy a man of millions, millions which he showed an inclination to spend, running about loose in their midst! Could such a thing be? All power should be saved from waste and directed to the promotion of some good object. Now the wealth of Amos was power, therefore, it was right that it should be directed towards promoting the pleasure of good people like themselves; this settled it. Before long Amos was invited to dine at this club, and at that; would he go to Lady So-and-So's ball? or, did he care to drop in on Lady That after dinner? Yes, Amos cared, cared very much indeed, though he did not say so, for this is what he had all along intended. Amos and dollars did not often separate for nothing; and before very long he was floating gaily upon the crest of the topmost wave of English society, and meeting the object of his adoration wherever he went.

And the object of his adoration, what did *she* think of this sudden popularity on the part of her admirer? Well, it flattered her, and she began to look kindly and even tenderly upon the man who had so nearly been her husband. If people liked him so much, and he was so sought after, he

could not be so undesirable, she thought; his attentions to her were attracting the notice of everyone, and she was not averse to notice. Amos not only appeared welcome wherever he went, but seemed always to say and do exactly the right thing. She began to look upon him in quite a new light, and fancy that she might do worse than marry him, after all. When other people put a high price upon what you have been accustomed to hold cheap, the chances are that you begin to ask yourself if, after all, you may not have made a mistake, and then it dawns upon you that there might be two ways of looking at the article in question, and you look again, the other way this time.

Thus it was that Constance determined to take another look at Mr. Fern. She did so, and when she saw him surrounded by an admiring circle of friends, to whom he was dispensing hospitality, which was sought after by the most exclusive in the land, she began to think that perhaps after all there might be a harder fate than that which proposed to make her the bride of Amos L. Fern, devoted admirer and millionaire.

So it happened that during that London season Constance *thought* a great deal of Amos, and what was more, *saw* a great deal of that persevering individual. Now, one can get accustomed to anything in this world, and by dint of thinking and seeing, Constance got accustomed to the idea of taking this man for her husband. She put herself in his place, or, rather,

in a place opposite to his, at the head of his own table, and strove to imagine herself dispensing the magnificent hospitality for which he, as a host, was famed. She saw, or strove to see, the crowd of guests, flatterers and admirers who would pursue her, even as they now pursued Amos, in order to put her upon a pinnacle of wealth and adulation; a pinnacle of brilliant light, a light born of riches, which should eclipse that of the real owner of those riches, and place him conveniently in the shade. Now this was not an unpleasant picture to look upon, and the more Constance looked upon it, the more did it strike her that the future might, after all, be all that her fancy painted it. Gerald and his love were episodes of the past—we have all had episodes, most of us foolish ones; she was no exception to the rule—moreover her episode was distinctly foolish, in fact, so foolish that she had had a very narrow escape of making a fool of herself. Supposing she had given way to her folly, and married Gerald, where would she be now; or where, rather, would be those visions of a magnificent future which were now floating before the eye of her mind, more tangible and more real in form than any that castles of Spanish manufacture had ever before assumed. And then, when she was congratulating herself upon having escaped the consequences of her episode, and telling herself that she had done well in so doing, it occurred to her to wonder how and why she had achieved this escape. The answer to this was very

simple: she had had no temptation. Gerald, the episode in question, had never asked her to sink into that abyss of poverty into which she was now figuratively gazing. This thought brought the blood rushing to her cheeks. How could she ever waste a thought upon a man who had not even spoken what she supposed him to feel! No, the idea was too degrading.

Gerald was a flirt, a beggarly flirt, who had no more intention of marriage than the veriest pauper under the sun. He had merely amused himself at her expense—why had he come to America? why had he followed her about? and why had he avoided her since her engagement had been announced? True, these and similar questions kept crowding before her, but she would not heed them; having once worked herself up into a state of resentment regarding Gerald and his “extraordinary” conduct, it was not likely that, being a woman, she could for one moment permit these to be any extenuating circumstances in the matter. No, her mind was made up as regards this man. It was an episode, a foolish one, an episode of the past. Thus having disposed, in thought, of her lover and his pretensions, there rose up before her the present, with all its delights and possibilities; then, again, beyond it, the future, dazzling, real, and, moreover, in her grasp; a future of dollars, a future of Mr. Fern. True, there was a drawback, a trifling one, and that drawback was Mr. Fern; but then,

there is no pleasure without pain, and there certainly would be no dollars without Fern ; besides which, it wasn't such a drawback after all ; other people didn't seem to mind Amos, in fact they rather liked him ; why, then, should she alone be so particular, and insist upon regarding as undesirable what other people, nice people, united in considering an acquisition to their society. Why, half the girls in London would give their eyes to marry Mr. Fern. This settled it. Here, then, was the climax of all this cogitation and self-counsel.

" Yes," said Constance to herself, at the end of this long reverie, " I will marry Mr. Fern."

CHAPTER XXX.

LYNNYEAR CASTLE.

THE following week saw our friends once more gathered together where we met them early in our story. They were once again at Lynnyear, enjoying the hospitality of the noble owner of that stately property. I hope my readers are glad, as I am myself, of this opportunity of taking a glimpse of that beautiful spot and the kindly people who dwell therein. Again a carriage rolls through the lodge gates. Again the wheels rattle along the well-kept road, which stretches for a mile between the entrance and the house. Once more Mona can lie back among the cushions, and gaze delightedly at the beauties all around. There stood those grand old trees; there stretched those grassy slopes; there sparkled those grateful waters in the sun; there browsed the deer; there, too, as of yore, were ruminating those patient, digesting cows. "Ah, how lovely it is!" she said once more, her eyes almost filling with tears as she drank in the beauty of the scene around.

Mrs. Courtown, too, was smiling. The scene pleased her also, and it pleased her to be returning to a place wherein she had before experienced

pleasure ; but this only, by the way, as a kind of supplementary joy to the great, all-pervading triumph which filled her mind. Before leaving town, she had telegraphed to her husband, in a few brief words which he would understand, that the golden fish was landed; Constance was tractable as of yore, and at Lynnyear Castle they should meet Mr. Amos L. Fern, who had confided to her his intention of once more trying his luck, and proposing to her daughter for the second time.

Constance alone did not smile. It was not that she was unhappy. It was simply that she had no time for thoughts about beauty and nature ; "it was all very pretty, of course, but one saw so much that was pretty nowadays ;" if she had been questioned on the subject she would most likely have agreed with the verse that describes the primrose on the river's brim, which, "a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more." But even then she would, most likely, have thought more of the rhyme than the meaning, and gone on making rhymes to him and brim, rim, swim, etc.

The sentiment of the words would have been as lost upon her in her present state of mind, as was the glamour of the scene before her. There was water, there were cows, and there was grass.

"What on earth is there to make a fuss about?" she exclaimed in response to Mrs. Courtown's remark of "how beautiful it all is!" "The cows eat the grass and drink the water. If you saw me sit-

ting by a cake with a cup of tea, in the distance, would you call *me* beautiful?" she went on, with a little sniff. Truly, Constance's temper was not too sweet in those days.

"Well, Mr. Fern might," said her mother, kindly.

"Oh, of course," replied the girl; "it would be about the most sensible remark he ever made, if he did," with another little sniff; by which it will be seen that besides being slightly short of temper, Constance was disposed to underrate the intellectual qualities of her intended husband. But, she told herself, she was marrying him with her eyes open, and she could never accuse herself in after life of having chosen a goose for a swan. Poor Amos! this was very hard, because it was so totally untrue. He was, indeed, a very wise man, and possessed of a decision and perseverance which had stood him in good stead, resembling nothing anserous in any respect, excepting, perhaps, that goose of history that laid such golden eggs. But this is digressing: the carriage has rolled up to the door, and the trio, all smiling now, are being ushered into the hall, thence to the drawing-room, and thence through the window to the tea-table on the lawn, where sits that charming lady, their hostess, and beside her, her cheerful, bright-eyed son. Tea and conversation were soon in full swing. Lady Lynnyear, with her usual kindness, observing the attention paid to Constance by the American millionaire, who had been so to the fore this last season, and noting that the Courtowns

seemed disposed to encourage him, had asked Mrs. Courtown if she would like to meet him during their next visit to Lynnyear. As may be supposed, an affirmative was the answer, and thus it came about that Constance was to learn her fate in the same place where she had learnt to love; for there was no doubt in her own mind, now that her decision was taken. She intended to marry Mr. Fern, and she would let that gentleman know her intention before the world was very much older. "When a disagreeable thing has to be done, get it over as quickly as you can," she had been wont to say, when taking credit to herself as a child, for the prompt manner in which she swallowed a pill; therefore, having made up her mind contrary to the dictates of her heart, she proposed to get it over as quickly as she could. Poor Amos! First of all, he was compared to a goose, and then later on to a pill! The goose was bad enough! but a pill—well, there was some consolation he never knew it; but though riches may persevere, in the end it is not unpleasant to reflect upon the saying about all not being gold that glitters. This does not quite express my meaning, but I think you will understand that I wish to convey the idea that the rest of the world finds comfort in the thought that when the very rich man enters for a prize he is doubtless handicapped in some manner or another at the start. Thus was our Amos handicapped as a pill, but—the pill went down.

Lord James soon led Constance away to the lover's walk, declaring "he felt just right for a stroll; would Miss Constance like to come with him?"

"Oh, yes, awfully," replied that young lady. "Thank you so much, Lord James; it is, indeed, kind of you."

"Well, perhaps it is," he answered, magnanimously; "but, really, it is such ages since I had a good talk with you I quite long for a little conversation."

"Well, and I, too, am glad to see you again," said Constance, kindly, looking at the comely face by her side. "You must be very happy," she added, with a half sigh.

"Happy! why, of course I am," exclaimed the boy, "I'm always happy with you."

"Oh, nonsense" (with a little laugh)! "you are the same as ever, I see. I didn't mean that; I meant you have never had anything to worry you, have you?"

"Well, no, not much," replied the lad, looking at her in half surprise. "But I say, you haven't much to worry you, I should think, either," he added, inquiringly.

"Oh, no, nothing." And Constance laughed.

"Look here," and Jim stopped straight before her, "tell me, is it true you are going to marry that Yankee—that Mr. Fern, whom the mother's asked down here?"

"Well," said Constance, "that's rather a leading question. Supposing I said yes?"

"Supposing you said 'yes.' Well, then, supposing I should say 'Poor Gerald!'"

"'Poor Gerald!' (with infinite scorn). 'Why 'Poor Gerald'? what has he got to do with it?' and Constance, letting her voice ring with passionate anger, waited for the boy to answer her.

"Well, I said 'Poor Gerald,'" answered Jim, sturdily, "because I like Gerald, and because—yes, because"—now looking her full in the eyes—"Gerald likes you."

"Gerald likes me!" she laughed; "then, may I ask, why your Gerald confides such information to you, and doesn't even condescend to speak to me on the subject?"

"Has Gerald never spoken?" said Jim, in response to this outburst.

"*No, never!*" emphatically.

Whereupon Jim whistled softly, adding, "Poor old chap, he always wanted dash." Then, after a pause, "Has Mr. Fern spoken?"

"Well, no; not exactly; not this time," answered Constance, blushing furiously.

"*Not this time!*" repeated Jim, with a puzzled look; "well, if you can't marry Gerald, because he hasn't spoken, how then do you propose to marry the other chap, when he hasn't spoken either *this time*?" giving her a sly look. And Constance, fairly laughing, said:

"It would serve you right, Lord James, if I got angry with you. What has it all got to do with you? I'm going to marry Mr. Fern, and there's an end of it. He's my own countryman, and, of course, I ought to like him best."

"Ought"! continued the incorrigible. "but it *has* lots to do with me, because I'm awfully in love with you, myself."

"You!" exclaimed Constance, laughing. "Oh, yes, I remember you once told me long ago that you were 'destroyed' with passion for me. How often have you been destroyed in between these two attacks?" she asked.

"Oh, you may laugh, Miss Constance, but it's a fact, and I think you're a ripper, a real ripper. Oh, if I were only a countryman of your own—a rich fellow-countryman," he added slyly—"would you say then, you 'ought' to like me best?"

"Yes, I would," she laughed, "but as it is, you see, I can only tell you I think you are a very good boy, and thank you for deigning to consider me a ripper."

"Oh, don't mention it," replied her companion, "I'm only glad you're glad."

"Come along, Lord James; don't try to be sarcastic; you'll only fail. Do try and be jolly, and cheer me up; make me laugh, *do*."

Who could resist the entreaty contained in the word *do*, accompanied, as it was, by a look from a pair of appealing eyes? Certainly not Jim. And,

obedient to the wish of his companion, he was soon chatting away in his best form, and being rewarded by little peals of merry laughter that sounded strange and weird in that dark and silent wood.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

ROSES AND DOLLARS.

IT was while gathering roses for her hair that Constance had once extorted from Gerald a promise to consider whatever she did as right—and it was now, while similarly engaged, that she eventually succumbed to Fate in the shape of Mr. Fern. Till this day no word had ever been spoken between them of love; no allusion had been made to their broken engagement. Amos had made no complaint, Constance no apology. It was reserved for now; “swallow the pill and get it over” policy having commended itself to Miss Courtown’s mind, she was not one to let obstacles stand in her way, or show the slightest hesitation over any course she had determined to pursue. She would have preferred settling things in some other way, even in some other place; roses and Amos were things apart. It was out of all keeping with the fitness of things, that a man like that should whisper words of love into ears half hidden by the blushing blossoms of sweet-scented flowers. No—a drawing-room, furnished in the most luxurious manner, would have been the most congenial *mise en scène* for the proposals of a man of wealth to a girl

who was entertaining these proposals seriously, solely on account of the wealth alone. But this was only a detail. She might have wished it otherwise; but what matter? So, taking the bull by the horns, or, in reality, the roses by the stalks, in rather a decided manner she began:

"Mr. Fern, I have never asked you to forgive me for my strange behaviour at Mount Desert last summer." And she commenced to pick another blossom, but it would not come off its stem.

Amos answered this little struggle first.

"Let me help you," he said, politely; then, "There was nothing to forgive, Miss Constance; your happiness was my one thought. You chose the course which seemed to bring you that happiness. It was not for me to blame you."

(This wasn't bad for a goose, was it?)

"Well," continued Constance, after a pause, renewing the attack, what a bore the man was. Why didn't he go down on his knees right away, and get it over? Amos was an obstinate pill. "Well, I didn't mean to grieve you, Mr. Fern, and if I did, I ask your pardon."

"Granted, Miss Constance, before it is asked," he replied. "I couldn't find it in my heart to be angry with you," he added, tenderly.

"Come, this was better," thought Constance, as she moved on to another tree.

She had got many more roses than she wanted by this time, and yet she couldn't leave off till she

had settled the other business. The other business was the acceptance of a millionaire; but she couldn't accept the millionaire till he proposed, and he certainly had not proposed yet. So there was no help for it. She must go on picking roses till he did. Luckily, there were plenty of roses. Yes, quite a sea of roses all around, and whether the roses bored her, whether she wearied of her self-imposed task, whether an insect had temporarily blinded her, or whether to give herself strength, I cannot say: but at that moment she shut her eyes, and screwed them up tight. What was this she saw? Had she been dazzled by the sun? Had those fluttering bushes rendered her giddy? What were those things waving, waving in the wind, away and away, far as the eye could reach, floating in the trees, lying on the ground. It was—they were dollars!

For one moment the air seemed full of shining coins, as before it had been of blossoming flowers. They sparkled and they shimmered, they dazzled and bewildered. There were no more roses, no more Amos—only dollars. But, in reality, Amos was there still, and very much there.

"What is it, Miss Constance," he exclaimed, in real alarm; "are you giddy? Let me run and get you some water. I won't be a moment."

"No, stay where you are, Mr. Fern. I'm all right now. I think it was a fly flew in my eye, and I can't see. Take the corner of this handker-

chief," holding out her own, "and see if you can't extract the thing."

And Amos took the handkerchief and began to apply himself to the task of rendering back the eyesight of his future wife. Seizing the upper lid in the finger and thumb of his left hand, with the right he made a dab at the beautiful eye beneath; thus the vision vanished; the dollars faded back to the imagination only, and here in their place were the roses, the roses and—Amos.

"I've got it !" he exclaimed, in triumph, aiming another dig at the poor deceased insect.

Constance sighed. Was it at sight of Amos, or because she had unconsciously caused the death of that fly ? Let us assume the latter.

"Keep quite still," continued Amos, intent on the business before him. "Oh, I am so sorry for you ; do I hurt you, Miss Constance ?"

"No."

"I shouldn't like to hurt you," he went on, as he rescrewed the handkerchief into a point.

"I hope not," replied Constance, as she rubbed her eye.

"Oh, don't rub it," he cried. "Oh, now you have pushed it right in again, and I shall have to get at it all over again."

"Oh, really, I am so sorry !"

"But it's nice to render you a service," he continued, "and"—

"And what ?" queried Constance, quickly; per-

haps he was going to get it over now; and she stood motionless, while her companion made further search for the offending fly.

"And," said Amos, as he got tight hold of those long lashes, "I should like to spend my life rendering you services."

"Really," was the encouraging answer, while that silken fringe struggled in his grasp.

"Yes, truly, Constance, I love you. Let me have the right to be with you always; always at hand to help you when in trouble. Constance, I love you; be my wife, and I shall be happy."

Bravo! Amos; that was very well put; but his manner of putting it was nothing to the girl beside him. All she gathered was that it was over. The pill had offered itself to be swallowed, and with a gulp, or rather a sigh, she rose for the effort.

"Yes, I will," she said, at the conclusion of the sigh.

"Hurrah!" cried Amos, having at length succeeded, and holding aloft the corpse of the fly in triumph; while Constance set to and diligently rubbed her long-suffering orb.

"Hurrah!" he cried, dropping the handkerchief in his excitement, "I shall be a happy man. May I kiss you, Constance, dear?"

"I think not here," she answered; "we are too near the house. You've dropped my handkerchief, Mr. Fern; and you haven't even shown me the animal you so skilfully extracted. Where is it?"

"Here," responded Amos, picking up the handkerchief from the ground; "and here," pointing to a black speck upon its white surface, "here is the happy fly that had the luck to meet its fate in your lovely eyes. Constance, I am like that fly," continued Amos, sentimentally.

"Really," was the answer, as though such a simile did not interest her. "The fly is dead, Mr. Fern—you are alive."

"Ah, yes," he replied, "I'm glad it's dead. I could brook no rivals, Constance; no, not even a fly."

"Ha, ha!" Constance gave a kind of giggle: the idea of Amos and a fly being rivals was very quaint.

"Call me Amos, won't you?" remarked the successful rival, encouraged by the laugh won by his poetical fancy.

"Certainly, if you wish it," replied his betrothed. "Come in, Amos; we must be going in now, the dressing-bell has rung ages ago."

So saying, she turned her steps in the direction of the house, and with her Amos L. Fern. The deed was done, the pill was swallowed, and there stood her affianced husband, the companion of all her future life, her Amos. For one moment she looked at him in answer to the gaze of love which welled from out his eyes, and then, "You can tell mamma this evening, if you like, Amos."

The next morning the New York papers announced that a wedding had been arranged between

Constance Courtown and Mr. Amos L. Fern of New York. The betrothal had taken place during a visit to the Marquis of Lynnyear at Lynnyear Castle. The marriage would take place in New York, and the contracting parties were expected to arrive in that city at a very early date.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NEW YORK.

ONCE more the *beau monde* of New York was in a state of excitement over the coming event. Once again Fifth Avenue re-echoed with the news, as it was discussed and talked over in many a splendid mansion on that aristocratic thoroughfare. The bride had arrived; and with her, her mother and sister. Mr. Fern had also arrived; but what was of far greater consequence, and very much greater interest, the trousseau was still arriving. All day long it was arriving. Once again came clothes from Paris and clothes from London; clothes from every city where the best can be bought; and presents. Ah! such presents—jewels and plate, plate and jewels. What magnificent presents are always given to that girl who is already fortunate in being the bride elect of a very wealthy man. But of all the presents and all the gifts, there were no gifts like those of Amos. This was the kind of business wherein he shone. In the matter of gifts Mr. Fern was unique; and, true to his reputation, all that was best, all that was rarest and most costly, fell victims to his almighty dollars, and were laid at the feet of his betrothed, in token of his devotion and never-failing constancy.

And Constance herself was happy and bright. To have come back to New York and faced the comments of the world, with the recollection of last year's fiasco still strong upon her, would have been a hard task. But now, to return once more mistress of the situation, sole proprietress of one of the richest men on either side of the Atlantic, the man whom any girl of either nation would gladly marry; this was not unpleasant. Constance was enjoying a little triumph, and this feeling glossed over much which she might have disliked, and enabled her to go through the ordeal of preparation with the greatest equanimity.

The days drew on apace. There was only one drawback to the general rejoicing; Mona was ill. Never very strong, a cold caught last winter had gained a firm hold on her system, and gradually she had grown weaker and more ethereal looking, though so imperceptibly that those who were always with her could not have told the change. Only her friends in America, who had not seen her for so many months, noticed those pale cheeks, and the languor which seemed so unnatural upon that bright face and active form. The truth then little dawned upon any one. Mona seemed unwell, though not more so than usual. A change would do her good. After the wedding, she should go away and get strong. Alas! men propose; but what avail their plans when a mightier than they forbids! Here were two events that seemed almost certain; two sisters whose names

were at this time in the mouth of everyone; in a fortnight one was to be married and the other would seek a change. Both these plans would come about, but, perhaps, not altogether as they had been expected to occur. Constance would, indeed, be married, and Mona would have a change. But what a change! No earthly climate would again affect her; the change she would gain was transportation to Heaven above. Ah! what rejoicing for those already there to welcome one so pure as this. And why should they, whom she leaves behind, grieve or sorrow? She is not dead, but gone before. A fresh cold, caught since her return to New York, confined her to her bed, and it was now only too apparent that she would not be able to be present at the wedding. But she was very cheerful and very content, entering into all the plans for her sister's happiness and discussing her future life.

Such was the state of affairs two days before the wedding was announced to take place. As may be imagined, everything was ready. The trousseau had arrived, and been duly described in the morning papers; and once again had people commented upon the unparalleled magnificence of this young lady's gowns. The presents had ceased to come; the flowers had been ordered, the favours were made, the cake itself was ready. Constance was, as usual, very cheerful and very happy; though an attentive observer might have declared the cheerfulness to be forced, and the appearance of content but a mask

upon the countenance. It was so, indeed; though her lips smiled, her heart was sick within her. Excitement had kept her up—excitement and pride. Yes, pride. She had chosen Amos for the second time; she would rather die than own to any one that she could not love him, and that the thought of a lifelong future spent with only him to keep her company was a thought she could not bear. Not even to Mona would she have acknowledged this. Once more she had made a failure, and once again was she, of her own free will, about to shipwreck all her dreams, all her hopes, and all her life. Was not this alone, this consciousness of failure, to a nature proud as hers, enough to render her miserable? Was it not galling to think that all her beauty, all her admiration, all her youth had brought her was this—despair—on the eve of her wedding, despair! Years and years with Amos; years and years with a man she hated—yes, hated. Where were the dollars now? She never thought of them; if she did, she loathed their very name. Had she not drunk the cup they offered her to the very dregs? Had she not been loaded with jewels and luxuries which only such money could buy? Had she not wearied of it? Had not all this talk of wealth disgusted her—this wealth she had so desired, so thought of, worshipped and longed for?

Yes it had gone; it no longer even gave her pleasure. It had left her, this craving for wealth; surfeited with all it brings, it sickened her, and in its

place, instead of those dollars to which she had looked forward with such ecstasies of joy, there remained one thing, one person, one man, Amos, her lover, her husband. *Her husband!* She almost said these words aloud. No! it could not be, it should not be; and yet it could and would be both. It must come to pass. Nothing could save her. Nothing but a miracle. Ah, life was hideous to her, and Constance, as she walked along the street to see a friend, on whom she had promised to call to say good-bye, nearly stamped her foot upon the pavement in token of disgust—disgust that she, Constance, in whom she had had such confidence, and who had taken so much trouble to map out a future according to her desires, should now find she was not infallible, but rather, a failure, hopeless, helpless, and miserable. But instead of stamping on the ground she hailed a passing cab. She was about to enter it, when a man who was crossing the street took off his hat, and moved on. It was Gerald; nothing but a miracle could save her. Was this the miracle? Drowning people catch at straws. How could Gerald help her! And yet Constance caught at Gerald. Where was her pride now?

“Mr. Drayton,” she exclaimed, as that gentleman continued on his way, “aren’t you going to speak to me?” Immediately Gerald was by her side. Those tones vibrated to his very soul.

“I feared to detain you, Miss Courtown,” he said.

"I am not in such a hurry. What are you doing here?"

"Oh, just passing through," said Gerald; he could not well confess that he had come to New York in spite of himself, that a something stronger than he had bade him come, come to witness his fate, and see the last bonds tied which should rob him for ever of his love.

"Will you take a little drive with me?" said Constance, as she entered the coupé.

"Will I?" exclaimed Gerald, his whole face lighting up with pleasure; "of course, I will. Where shall I tell him to go?" he added.

"Oh, anywhere; I don't want to go home yet," said Constance, hurriedly, "Tell him to go to the park; take the unfrequented road; there will be no one there at this hour, anyhow," she continued, as though for her own satisfaction; "I mustn't be seen."

"Of course not," answered Gerald, getting in and seating himself by her side, as the driver, according to instructions, drove off—but at the same time he wondered at the curious chance which had brought them thus together, and still more upon the strange conduct of the girl by his side, in calling after him when he had attempted to pass her by, and asking him to accompany her in a drive round the park in a hired coupé—alone together—the very day but one before she was to be married to another.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DRIVE IN A HACK CAB.

IN silence they rattled along, at least a silence only broken by the sound of the wheels which bore them. Neither spoke, for though neither would have owned it to themselves, the companionship of one another, thus suddenly by some strange chance brought together, was a pleasure too deep for words.

Gerald glanced at Constance. She was leaning back in her seat, apparently lost in thought; he scanned her face as though to gauge her thoughts through that index of her mind. Those thoughts were not happy ones, judging by the expression of sadness that well-loved countenance wore. At last she spoke, but first she laughed, a hard bitter laugh, that jarred upon his ear.

"You haven't congratulated me yet, Mr. Drayton, and I am going to be married the day after to-morrow."

"I did not think you would need my congratulations," he answered gravely. "But if you do, let me offer them—may you be happy."

"Thanks," was the monosyllabic answer, as she once more relapsed into silence.

"May I ask one question," he said presently.

"Dozens, if you like," with a forced attempt at gaiety.

"Are you happy now?"

Constance did not answer.

"Forgive me," he said, his voice quivering with the earnestness, which he put into his words. "But I must have your word for it that you are happy. Answer me, Constance; I will hear from your own lips that you are doing this thing of your own free will, that you are content; say that it is so, and I will not plague you further."

"And if I refuse?" she asked.

"You will not refuse. If you do not tell me, it is not because you refuse to do so, it is because you will not dare; the truth you are afraid to own to me."

"*Dare!*" she cried, sitting upright in her seat and glancing full into the face of her companion, her eyes flashing upon him like the lightning which heralds the coming storm. "*Dare!*" she repeated, in tones of anger; "I dare do anything. Have I not shown it; can any one say I do not dare?" and then, quailing before the penetration of that glance, which she herself had challenged, her gaze lowered and turned towards the window, to rest upon the velvet grass, the waving trees and deep-blue sky. "Ah, I have dared," she went on more softly, as she looked at the beauties all around, and then with a little sigh as though she had forgotten the present moment, forgotten everything but herself, she added, "but dare I do it once again?"

The trees inclined their graceful bows, the birds unchecked continued in their song, the sky above them smiled on all below, but answer there was none. Her words were spoken to the empty air; the empty air was dumb.

"Well," came presently from Gerald's lips, and the sound made her start as though awaking from some deep dream. "Well," he said, "I wait your answer. Do you *dare* to tell me you are content?"

"One moment, and a faint 'yes,'" reached his ears.

The voice which spoke that word seemed far away, for the face of the girl beside him was averted, still looking towards the open window, whence flew forth that "yes," that word which should have sealed his fate and crushed the longing which now consumed his soul. But he would not take it so.

"Constance, you dare too much," he answered sternly, you *dare* to lie to me."

"Gerald!" and she turned and once more looked upon his face. "Gerald, is it manly to speak to me thus, is it like yourself? You asked me if I were content and I have told you 'yes;' what more would you have me say? Would you have me declare myself a fool; would you have me tell you I am perhaps about to commit a crime, my eyes all open while I do it?" The ring of passion was in her voice. "Gerald, I yielded to impulse. I saw you and wished to speak with you once again. I seldom deny myself what I fain would do. I could trust you, you are a

gentleman, an old and well-tried friend, and you take advantage of that trust when you wish me to own that I am false, own that I am bad, both of which I should have to do did I own I were not happy. Oh, Gerald," she went on, her tone now one of infinite reproach, "Oh, Gerald, it is unkind."

"No, Constance, I am not unkind; you have trusted me, and, by all I hold most dear, I swore I would not speak to you, save words which all might hear; but surely I had some right, if only the right of that friendship to which you yourself alluded, to hear from your own lips that you are happy—that was all I asked, and you tell me I wish to make you forswear yourself and tell me you are false; perhaps cruel—even wicked. Constance, why not tell me so, if that is what you feel; why nurse your foolish pride; why not now, before it is too late; why not draw back before your wrong is numbered in the past? Constance, be true, true to yourself, noble and brave; the moral strength which enables us to draw back while yet there may be time, regardless of the world, regardless of all that future days may bring, is strength direct from Heaven; a strength we all should have. Constance, I do not plead for myself, it is for you; oh, save yourself, save your self-esteem, your self-respect, your happiness, your life, before it is too late." Strange words these, from one who had never spoken to her of love, impassioned tones for a young man reckoned cold and devoid of sentiment by the world in which he lived; but when a man is moved

we cannot even guess the eloquence which may burst forth from its long pent up prison; thus few people could have given Gerald credit for such passion, such feeling, as leaning forward in the shabby coupé he tried to meet the gaze of the girl whom he strove to influence.

"Gerald, I am not happy," came in faltering tones, and then a voice of agony cried, "Oh Gerald, save me! save me, and tell me what to do. I never knew it would come to this; but it must have been Providence which made us meet to-day."

"Darling!" he cried, "I have never spoken to you of love, nor would I now urge my claims when your troth is plighted to another: but you yourself have owned you are not happy, that gives me leave to speak; darling, give me also leave to make you happy; despite the world, despite the things that other men may say, share the future with me, and let us face the world together; darling, be my wife!"

The girl turned towards him. Was hers the hard, cold face that had gone so coolly through the last few weeks? this face now stained with tears, now beaming with a lasting love? Oh, how beautiful she looked, thought Gerald, as the blushes upon her cheeks, and an infinite tenderness that slyly gazed from beneath those long silk lashes, she smiled, and said:

"Oh, Gerald, is this a dream?"

Then that face was hidden; concealed from view; buried on the shoulder of him she loved; and that

fair form was encircled by a pair of strong arms that gave her strength. What was the world to her! With those arms around her, could she not weather the storm this action might invoke! And the coupé rattled on through the green drives, and 'neath the overhanging trees. That old hack-horse conveyed a load such as horses seldom draw—two really happy hearts—two people whom the torrents of this world had rudely swept apart; but now a kind fate—a fate all-powerful and strong—had once more brought together.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GOOD-BYE, DOLLARS.

GERALD and Constance having thus settled matters entirely to their own satisfaction, the rest of the programme was comparatively easy. The driver was spoken to, the coupé turned round, and presently stopped in front of a telegraph station. Gerald was telegraphing to a friend to come and see him married.

"Nothing like getting a thing over," Constance had said, with a smile, when he had told her their only course was to get married at once. So they journeyed to a quiet little church, whose pastor was a personal friend of the bridegroom, and there, that same day, they were married.

If stolen joy be sweet, what happiness should be in store for two people who were joined together under such circumstances as these? Some girls might have regretted the absence of bridesmaids, the want of trousseau, the lack of presents. Not so Constance; she had all she wanted—the one man whom she now knew she loved, and had loved during these last feverish months. The trousseau lay arranged in state at home—the bride was married in a morning gown. And, for the benefit of those who may bear

me ill-will for baulking them of all description of a bridal dress, I will add that this morning gown was tailor-made, the material a light grey cloth trimmed with silver braid. The fit of it was perfect, while a little white waistcoat, which peeped out in front, and linen collar and cuffs, were the only white worn by this most unconventional bride.

That night the happy couple sailed for Europe. Next morning the papers contained the announcement of their marriage.

“‘Marriage of Miss Constance Courtown!’ why,” exclaimed some one, “the wedding was not to be till to-morrow,” and then reading on, “‘to Mr. Gerald Drayton, eldest son of the Hon. Charles Drayton, and grandson of the late Earl of Malone.’”

I leave you to picture the storm of comment which burst upon the town; it would be far beyond my powers to describe what every one said when this paragraph had been duly read and digested. “Why, this was marvellous! What a girl; how deep she must be; the whole thing must have been prearranged,” and so on and so on. Had they seen that old hack-horse journeying round Central Park, I do not think they could have suspected any one of prearranging such a drive. Well, there it was; they had married; moreover, they had gone; but how would it affect other people? What would Amos do? What would the Courtowns say? Of course, this was intensely interesting even to all those who were in no way concerned in the matter; and as we

are very much concerned, and therefore more interested still, we had better at once observe what did happen when the first shock of the intelligence reached the ears of Mr. Fern and the relatives of his betrothed.

On the doorstep of Mr. Courtown's house, by a strange coincidence, there stood two men. They were not acquainted with each other, though one, at least, divined the other's errand. One was Mr. Amos L. Fern; the other, Harry Darnley, the friend who had witnessed the runaway marriage. The former was calling upon Mr. Courtown for explanations; the latter was there intent upon giving them. The door opened, and they entered. Together they were shown into the study of their host. There we will leave them. I do not envy either of them their interview.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A LEGACY OF PEACE.

UP-STAIRS we will go, where Mona lies on her bed of sickness. Constance's non-return on the preceding night had not caused her family any uneasiness, as she had said, before going out, it was just possible she might remain with the friend to whom she was about to bid good-bye. The girl had seemed so restless of late, and so eager to be doing something or other, as though to change the current of her thoughts, that her parents deemed it best to refrain from thwarting her in whatever she proposed to do. Therefore, her half-avowed intention of remaining with her friend provoked no remark. This morning they had read the papers, and if a bombshell had burst in their midst, the state of disturbance in that house could not have been greater than it now was. Mrs. Courtown, little dreaming of the consequences of her act, rushed into the room of her sick daughter, her face all streaming with tears.

"What is it, mother?" exclaimed the invalid. Poor loving Mona! How ill she looked! her beautiful full cheeks now all wasted and drawn with suffering and weakness. "What is it, mother?" she continued, agitated strangely. "What has happened?

Oh, what is it ?" And so saying, she sat upright in her bed, a position which her strength would scarcely permit.

"It's Constance ! Constance !" cried her mother, nigh distraught.

"Constance ?" queried Mona in trembling tones, "what of her ? Is she ill ?"

"Gone," answered Mrs. Courtown, "gone; married and left for England with Mr. Drayton."

"Oh !" was all that Mona said. If any one had been watching her, it would have appeared as though she had suddenly received a blow right across that beautiful face, which flushed at that rude touch, then the colour fled and left it deadly pale. What was it she felt ? was the news too sudden ? was the discovery of her sister's want of trust too hard, too grievous, to be borne ? No one will ever know. "Constance had gone ! Constance had gone !" was all the sound which rang within her ears. No good-bye had she spoken; no farewells had she made. Were these her thoughts as she gradually sank back upon her pillows exhausted with the sudden news which she had nerved herself to bear ? Ah, who can tell ? She closed her eyes. What visions did she then behold ? Visions of angels ? Visions of light ? Let us think so; let us believe that those beautiful eyes which we no more shall see, which had looked their last on this side of the grave, were now full of holy joy and gazing right out into the bright vista of eternal life. For Mona had left us. That soul had fled.

That sweet life was over. Why weep for one whose past was without blemish? Why grieve for her whose future is secure? Rejoice rather that one so perfect and one so pure should be early summoned to that company of angels, whose welcome sure awaited her. Ah, raving father, weeping mother, sorrowing friends, be comforted, take heart and smile. See, has she no smile? thy loved one, who lies thus asleep? It is selfish to wish her back, cruel to call upon her name; that name she shall bear no more. Rather thank Heaven that she was permitted to be with you even for a space, and render thanks that, unsullied and unharmed, she has left this world of strife for a place of everlasting peace. Ah! 'tis easy thus to speak, for time alone will fill a void, and time and patience only, bring submission and resignation to the hard measures of unerring fate.

All thought of the recent marriage of their other daughter was swallowed up in the greater grief. Mona was gone, Mona was dead. What other care could harm? what other sorrow bruise?

Constance and Gerald will ne'er forget that voyage, the feeling of freedom, the knowledge of content, those days of love, those days of peace. "Ah! this was life," thought Constance, as she leant over the bulwarks in the light of a silvery moon, with Gerald by her side.

"This is too good to last," she murmured. "Oh, Gerald, if it shouldn't last?"

"Well, our love will last," he answered; "we are

sure of each other. We have both been tried; what now can come between us?"

No, nothing can come between them, for grief does not divide; rather does it knit together. A common sorrow is oftentimes more binding than aught that can befall; then the necessity of comfort is felt and sympathy sought and given. But Constance's words were in one sense true. It was too good to last. At Liverpool they were handed a telegram. It said: "Mona is dead. Return at once."

Let me draw a veil over the grief of that stricken sister, though then she did not know that she herself had aught to do with the weight of sorrow which had befallen her. Why describe the wealth of tenderness bestowed upon her by that one man whom she had chosen, who now, in this hour of trial, was a helpmate in very deed—a helpmate who wished to share her burden. Thus these two were drawn together, and sorrow cemented that perfect love with a seal such as mere joy could never have bestowed. Would Mona have wished it otherwise? I think not. By her death all strife had ceased. The trouble ended. Her sister could return, and, in this time of grief, feel certain of her parents' pardon; and, instead of being stretched asunder, the bonds of parental love would be knitted together with greater strength, brought together by mutual woe. Thus Mona left a legacy of peace. In dying, she was blest. Sleep on, and take thy rest. And may we feel, perhaps, that though she for a time has left us, yet those

sweet eyes can penetrate the gloom, and watch o'er us from Heaven above. And may we rejoice in the knowledge that one among that heavenly throng once sojourned here among us; that we have met her here on earth, a model for ourselves, a pattern and example which all of us should strive to follow.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN AFTER YEARS.

ON putting down a book which has interested me, I invariably desire to hear more of those people whose fortunes I have so patiently followed; for, having deserted for a time the realities of my own life to laugh or weep with the individuals of whom I have been reading, I leave them with reluctance and would fain hear later tidings than their historians have told.

May I hope that it has been my good fortune to interest others, as others have interested me, and that I am not alone in the regret with which I bid my characters farewell. Trusting that is so, I will assume that news of the various people whose daily life I have endeavoured to describe will not be unwelcome, and that my readers will be glad to learn what each one is doing, now that my tale is done.

Constance and Gerald have developed into a model couple, and the never-failing devotion of the latter to his cheery wife is a perpetual marvel to their more fashionable friends. By the unexpected death of his cousin, Gerald succeeded his uncle and father in the family title and estates, and as Lord and Lady Malone he and his wife have settled down into a quiet country existence, living chiefly upon their

property and occupying themselves with its concerns. They are often visited by Lord Ringwood and Charlie Summers.

Lord Ringwood is still unmarried; and in appearance as tired as ever; no amount of years seems to give him rest or lessen that fatigue with which he declares he was born; but he is notwithstanding always the same kind, warm hearted and popular fellow as he was when first we had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. Charlie Summers eventually married a charming girl, whom he met down California way, and as her father was a man of wealth and she herself little anxious to continue residence in her own country, they have permanently settled in England.

And Cecil, the noble, self-sacrificing, chivalrous Cecil ! He is now soldiering in real earnest. He is in India winning fame and distinction whenever he has an opportunity to do so. He is graver even than of old. His hair is streaked with gray. He never goes into society now, and appears to have a dislike, almost amounting to horror, of the society of women. But Colonel Sinclair, though he is seldom met with outside the barrack square, is looked upon as the hero of some romance, and many a young girl connects that tall, handsome figure with a story of bygone love; and stern as Cecil may appear, this is not surprising, seeing that he ever wears a peculiar scarf pin, the secret of which no one has ever dared demand.

It was a pin which Florence gave him before she left England—a little golden gate, on the top bar of which was engraved "No trespassing;" and no one had trespassed. No temptation had been sufficient to open those jealous bars, though Fate had smiled at them and lightly brushed that barrier aside.

This gallant soldier is worshipped by his men, and where Colonel Sinclair leads, there, all are wild to follow.

Mr. Fern has been snapped up; such a prize in the matrimonial market, so long as it was left unsecured, remained a standing reproach to the girlhood of his country. Therefore, Amos is now the possessor of the most beautiful house and the happiest wife that New York City can produce.

Mr. Fern came well out of the trial when so badly used by the object of his first affections, and in the time of grief which followed, showed himself both considerate and thoughtful, freely forgiving her who had wronged him, and rendering many little services to the family so cruelly bereaved. Also, he has since much improved under the refining influence of his young wife, and this couple often spend a few weeks with the Malones, during their annual visit to Europe.

Lynnyear Castle continues the most hospitable and most delightful house in the county. Lord Lynnyear still fitly represents the *haute noblesse* of our island home, while his charming wife, as usual, casts a spell upon all those whose good for-

tune it is to cross her path, compelling them to look upon her and admire the potency of that virtue, "tact." Their children are out in the world, spreading around them, by their example, the love of good, and strict code of honour which they were taught in that beautiful, happy home.

And the pigs—These porcine celebrities are still alive, having attained, I should imagine, to a greater age than is usually given to the lot of pigs. I fancy but few pigs die of old age, therefore it is no easy matter to discover what is the number of years which represents a lifetime for one of these animals. However, let us trust that our two accomplished specimens may prove exceptions to the majority of their race and live to a good, green old age. The sad fact should be recorded, however, that they have already lost their figures, and that while still able to go through their repertoire of tricks, it is not with the same alacrity which was formerly the chief feature in this wonderful programme.

Whenever Lord Ringwood pays a visit to Lynn-year Castle, a thing he frequently does, he ever makes it a duty to procure some special delicacy—from a pig's point of view—which he will himself give to this pampered couple. The sight of that languid individual, usually too indolent to take any trouble beyond what is absolutely necessary, toiling across the lawn with a basket full of scraps, intent upon

giving pleasure to a couple of pigs, is a thing which will frequently call forth the raillery of his friends, who are none the less mystified when Ringwood, with rather a sadder smile than the occasion seems to warrant, replies: "Really, dear boy, these animals and I are very old pals, though once we were rivals who all three entered for a race. On that occasion I came in third. I bear no malice and—I feed the pigs."

FINIS.

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